BLACKOUT

KARAKURI CIRCUS

KAZUHIRO FUJITA

7

DELCOURT

KARAKURI CIRCUS

7

KAZUHIRO FUJITA

★ SUMMARY OF THE PREVIOUS VOLUMES ★

MASARU AND SHIROGANE STARTED A NEW, WANDERING LIFE IN ORDER TO ESCAPE THE PROBLEMS THAT CAME WITH THE BOY'S HUGE INHERITANCE. THEY FIRST MET THE THREE MEMBERS OF THE NAKAMACHI CIRCUS, THEN WERE JOINED BY TARANDA LISELOTTE, A BEAST TAMER. DURING THEIR TRAVELS, THEY WERE INVOLVED IN A HOSTAGE SITUATION AND MANAGED TO RESCUE THE HOSTAGES THANKS TO THEIR EXCELLENT TEAMWORK. FOLLOWING THIS EVENT, THE MEMBERS OF THE NAKAMACHI CIRCUS WERE ABLE TO SECURE A PLACE FOR THEIR SHOW. HOWEVER, THEY NEEDED TO VISIT THE STRAW CIRCUS TO BORROW SOME EQUIPMENT.
A FOOD POISONING INCIDENT RESULTED IN SHIROGANE PERFORMING IN THEIR SHOW, EVENTUALLY INVOLVING TARANDA AND MASARU AS WELL!
WILL OUR FRIENDS PROVE THEMSELVES WORTHY OF THIS GRAND SPECTACLE?

ACT V (CONTINUED)

CIRCUS * MASARU AT THE CIRCUS -
LAST PART "THE CURTAIN FALLS FOR NOW" 3

INTERMISSION

"THE NAKAMACHI CIRCUS - WHAT TO DO?" 21

ACT VI

CIRCUS * THE NAKAMACHI CIRCUS - FIRST CHAPTER 41
CIRCUS * THE NAKAMACHI CIRCUS - SECOND CHAPTER 59
CIRCUS * THE NAKAMACHI CIRCUS - THIRD CHAPTER 77

ACT VII

KARAKURI * A MAN "THE CURTAIN RISES" 95
KARAKURI * A MAN "GUY RECH" 113
KARAKURI * A MAN "NARUMI'S LEFT ARM" 131
KARAKURI * A MAN "WE MUST LEAVE PARIS" 149
KARAKURI * A MAN "THE GREAT TENT" 167

■ KAZUHIRO FUJITA ■

ACT V: CIRCUS * MASARU AT THE CIRCUS - LAST PART

Stray Circus

AH HA HA HA

...WHILE ESCAPING THE WATCHFUL EYE OF HER BIG, DARK-LOOKING BODYGUARD?!

SO, DEAR AUDIENCE, WILL OUR YOUNG LOVER BE ABLE TO GIVE A FLOWER TO HIS BELOVED...

Ou

AH

TAN TAN TAN TAN TAN

M?!?

...FOR YOU!

THIS IS...

GOOH

HAHAHA

AAAHHH! NOOOOO!

YEAH! YOU'LL MAKE IT!

COME ON, KID! HAVE COURAGE!

BUT NOW...

...THEY'RE LAUGHING!

THEY LOOKED SO SAD...

...BEFORE THE SHOW STARTED.

KOJI AND YUMI ARE LAUGHING TOO!

...WATCHING THIS ACT I'M IN!

THEY'RE LAUGHING...

OUAHAHAHAHA

I HAVE TO SUCCEED!

CLIC CLIC CLIC

WILL OUR YOUNG HERO NEVER BE ABLE TO GIVE THIS BEAUTIFUL FLOWER TO THE LOVE OF HIS LIFE?

WHAT MISFORTUNE! THE BOY IS TRAPPED!

... DESPITE IT ALL, THE YOUNG LADY WAITS FOR HER LOVE WITH HOPE!

WILL THE FEELINGS OF THE POOR ONCE AGAIN BE THWARTED BY THE MIGHT OF THE RICH AND POWERFUL?!

OUAF
GNAP
GNAP
GNAP
GNAP
OUAF!

OW, OW, OW!
THE BODYGUARD
IS PANICKING!

HA HA!
HA HA
OUAF
OUAF
OUAH!

OOOH! IT'S INCREDIBLE!
THE YOUNG LADY'S DOGS
ARE ATTACKING THE
BODYGUARD TO HELP
THEIR MISTRESS!!!

HA HA HA HA...

AAAHHH!
HELP ME!

TON TON TON TON

OR DID SHE ALREADY FORGET ALL ABOUT HER KNIGHT IN SHINING ARMOR?!

FINALLY! THE TIME HAS COME FOR THE BOY TO DECLARE HIS LOVE! WILL THE YOUNG LADY ACCEPT THE FLOWER?

I...
HH...

TARANDA
...

HI HI

I...

THE YOUNG LADY HAS ACCEPTED THE FLOWER AND THE LOVE OF THE YOUNG CHIMNEY SWEEPER!

HOORAY!!!

HOURRA BRAVO

HOURRA

LET'S CHEER ONCE AGAIN FOR THE BOY...

...WHO ACCEPTED TO PLAY THIS ROLE!

LOOK!

EVEN THE BODYGUARD ACKNOWLEDGES THEIR LOVE AND CONGRATULATES THEM!

...SHIROGANE IS DEFINITELY ABLE TO LAUGH!

THIS MEANS THAT WHILE BEING IN A CIRCUS...

MADE UP AS A CLOWN, SHE SMILED THROUGH THE WHOLE ACT...

BRAVO

SHIRO-GANE IS LAUGHING!

WE HOPE TO SEE YOU ALL AGAIN SOON AND WISH YOU A GREAT AFTERNOON!

THE STRAW CIRCUS THANKS YOU FOR COMING TO OUR SHOW TODAY.

HE HE .. I DIDN'T REALLY TRY TO BE FUNNY...

SO FUNNY!

HA HA! YOU HAD SUCH A FUNNY FACE, MASARU!

EEEH?! WHERE'S SHIRO-GANE?!

DID YOU SEE HOW TIGHTLY TARANDA HUGGED MASARU?!

AH... BUT THAT WAS PART OF THE PLAY, THAT'S ALL!

...

RIGHT, TARANDA?

I HAVEN'T SEEN KOJI AND YUMI LAUGH LIKE THAT FOR A LONG TIME. I AM FOREVER IN YOUR DEBT.

YOU KNOW, EVEN I WAS SUR-PRISED...

DAAAAH

SOME-ONE IS GONNA GET HURT!

NORI, HIRO. LET'S GET GOING.

CAN I HAVE YOUR CELL PHONE NUMBER?

SHIRO-GANE! TELL ME YOU LOVE ME!

COME ON, SHIROGANE! COME WITH US! IF YOU STAY WITH THE NAKAMACHIS, YOU'LL NEVER GET TO DO SUCH GREAT ACTS AGAIN!

BESIDES, I DIDN'T KNOW THAT YOU COULD MANIPULATE SUCH A HUGE PUPPET! YOU COULD MAKE IT A TOTALLY SEPARATE ACT!

YOUR COMIC NUMBER WAS SO PERFECT!

YOU CAN TELL ME, SHIROGANE .. DEEP DOWN, I'M ALWAYS FIRST IN YOUR HEART, RIGHT?

DON

DAN

119

OR YOUR BUTT!

SHIROGANE! I HOPE HE DIDN'T GROPE YOUR CHEST!

TAN TAN TAN TAN

119

GLING

FAREWELL, SHIROGANE. THIS IS ONLY TILL WE MEET AGAIN.

"THANK YOU FOR YOUR KINDNESS. SHIROGANE"

Thank you for your kindness. Shirogane

HEY! WE'RE NOT PERVERTS!

MY BEAU-TIFUL SHI-ROGANE IS LEAVING...

HM?

WE'LL WAIT FOR THEM OUTSIDE, MOMMY.

PERFECT. CAN WE GO NOW?

ALRIGHT! WE GOT HER BACK SAFELY WITH US!

DON

DON

. I AM SORRY TO HAVE MADE YOU COME ONSTAGE.

YOUNG MASTER ...

YES, MA'AM

DAAN

PUT ME DOWN IM-MEDIATE-Y!

IN FACT... I...

I HAVE TO CONFESS THAT... I WAS NOT LAUGH-ING...

... NOT REALLY ...

BUT I DID IT...

...BECAUSE I WANTED YOU TO KNOW WHAT THE CIRCUS IS REALLY ABOUT

I KNOW, AND I FOUND IT INCREDIBLE! ALSO...

. I GOT TO SEE YOU SMILE DURING THE WHOLE ACT! I'D NEVER SEEN YOU LIKE THIS BEFORE!

YOU KNOW... A CIRCUS ARTIST MUST LEARN THE WAYS OF BODY LANGUAGE... AND ALSO MUST BE CAPABLE TO FEIGN ALL EMOTIONS ON THEIR FACES...

WHAT?

SO... SHIROGANE WASN'T LAUGHING. IT WAS JUST PART OF THE ACT...

AH... I UNDERSTAND...

BECAUSE OF ME, SHIROGANE SEEMS EVEN MORE SAD!

AH... SHOOT!

I AM SO SORRY, YOUNG MASTER!

I UNDERSTAND VERY WELL YOUR CONCERN OVER THE FACT THAT I NEVER LAUGH... BUT...

... I'D LIKE FOR HER TO TAKE CARE OF HERSELF A BIT MORE.

...SINCE SHIROGANE HAS ALWAYS BEEN BY MY SIDE TO PROTECT ME...

IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL, BUT...

IT'S OKAY, SHIROGANE!

UM..

...TAKING CHARGE OF HER LIFE!

I'D REALLY LIKE TO SEE HER HAPPY, DOING WHATEVER SHE WANTS TO DO...

SHIRO-GANE, WAIT...

...THAT SHE NEVER WILL?!

...DOES THAT MEAN...

...EVEN IN A CIRCUS...

BUT, IF SHE CAN'T LAUGH...

TELL ME THE TRUTH!

SHIRO-GANE!

SO... HOW WAS IT FOR YOU? DID YOU HAVE FUN?

BUT FOR YOU, IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE YOU'VE ACTED LIKE THAT, RIGHT?

I HAD A GREAT TIME PLAYING IN YOUR ACT...

YES, YOUNG MASTER?

ZZAN...

FLASH

SAH

HMM...

...THAT'S MORE THAN ENOUGH!

BUT TO ME...

I WILL DO IT AGAIN .. ONE DAY...

YES, I DID...

SHE CAN'T TELL ME ANY MORE ...

TODAY I DECIDED SOMETHING!

NARUMI!

ONE DAY, UNDER THIS BIG TOP...

IN FRONT OF A CROWD LIKE TODAY...

I'LL INTRODUCE THE NAKAMACHI CIRCUS!

INTERMISSION

NAKAMACHI CIRCUS - "WHAT TO DO?"

TAC TAC TAC

THAT MIGHT TURN OUT TO BE A PROBLEM.

IT'S TRUE THE PARK ISN'T THAT BIG...

BLOP BLUP

VLM VLM VLM

IF WE WERE TO DO TH S OUTSIDE, WE WOULDN'T HAVE ANY SAFETY ROPES FOR OUR BALANCING ACTS.

PSCH

THAT'S WHY WE'RE TRYING TO FIND OUT HOW WE CAN MAKE IT!!

TO ME, THAT'S NOT A REASON TO TURN DOWN THIS OPPORTUNITY!

...

EVEN IF WE'VE BEEN BLACKLISTED BY ALL THE CIRCUS SYNDICATES!

HIRO, YOU KNOW WE DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY LEFT AT ALL!

AND WE DON'T HAVE ANY SEATS, ANY LIGHTS OR A MARQUEE EITHER! DO YOU GET IT!?

GOOD EVENING, EVERYONE! AS YOU CAN SEE, THE NAKAMACHI CIRCUS IS FACING A BIG PROBLEM!

REAL FOOD! MADE BY SUPER CUTE GIRLS!

YEAH!

HE HEE

DINNER'S READY!

BUT WE STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT SHOW WE'LL DO OR HOW WE'LL DO IT..

THREE DAYS FROM NOW, WE'RE SUPPOSED TO PERFORM A SHOW IN THIS CITY...

MOST PEOPLE, HEARING THIS CONVERSATION, WOULD THINK "HEY, MASARU SHOULD USE THE MONEY HE INHERITED!"

UNFORTU-NATELY, TO BRING HIS CAGE AND TO TAKE CARE OF HIM, WE'D NEED MORE MONEY THAN WE HAVE...

MAYBE I COULD CALL DRUM BACK.

THEY'RE ALL VERY TALENTED... BUT THE CIRCUS IS COMPLETELY BROKE

That's a real problem

FOR NOW, I CAN'T DO ANYTHING MORE THAN JUST LISTEN TO THEM...

IF I WERE TO USE MY MONEY, I WOULD HURT THE NAKAMA-CHIS' PRIDE. THEY DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY BUT THEY'RE BRAVE AND HONEST!

BUT SHIROGANE TOLD ME WE'D BETTER NOT...

... EVEN THOUGH I REALLY WANT TO HELP THEM IN SOME WAY OR ANOTHER!

Sigh

NO! BUSKERS ALWAYS MANAGE TO MAKE A CONSISTENT SHOW, NO MATTER HOW MANY THEY ARE.

BOSS! AT THAT LITTLE PLACE, WITHOUT ANY EQUIPMENT... WE ARE BUSKERS!! WE CAN'T DENY IT!

IT'S OKAY... EVEN IF WE DON'T HAVE A REAL MARQUEE, I'D PREFER TO MAKE A REAL CIRCUS SHOW!

PERFORMING IN THE STREETS IS A BUSKER THING!

BUT... WE DON'T HAVE ANY MUSIC OR LIGHTS!

THANKS TO THE SETTING?

A CONSISTENT PROGRAM?

WE NEED TO MAKE IT THROUGH A CIRCUS SHOW IN ORDER TO MANAGE TO MAINTAIN SOME CONSISTENCY IN OUR PROGRAM WITH ALL THE DIF-FERENT ELEMENTS WE'VE GOT.

BUT, WE... EACH ONE OF US HAS HIS OWN PECULIAR ABILITIES! WE'D NEVER MAKE SOMETHING CONSISTENT OUT OF IT!

GO

GO

THE AUDIENCE MUST NOT LOSE THE STORYLINE OF OUR SHOW!

THAT'S HOW YOU DO IT WHEN YOU MAKE PEOPLE PAY FOR YOUR PERFOR-MANCE!!

BUT... IN A CIRCUS SHOW, THERE'S A STORYLINE, A THEME. YOU HAVE TO KEEP PEOPLE'S ATTENTION UNTIL THE VERY END!!

SHOWS PERFORMED IN THE STREETS ARE MADE SO THAT ANYONE WHO'D WANT TO WATCH CAN STOP BY AND START TO DO SO!

ONCE THEY'VE HAD ENOUGH, THEY'RE FREE TO LEAVE ANYTIME!

BETWEEN EACH TURN, THE DEEP SILENCE WOULD MAKE THE AUDIENCE EVEN COLDER ...

THE ARTISTS CAME TO TAKE THEIR TURNS, ONE AFTER THE OTHER... THE ATMOSPHERE WAS GETTING TENSE, BUT WE COULDN'T DO ANYTHING!

OUR GENERATING SET FELL OUT OF ORDER AND SO WE WERE WITHOUT ELECTRICITY! NO MORE MUSIC AND NO MORE LIGHTS... WE COULDN'T EVEN MAKE THE ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR OUR PERFOR-MANCES WITH A MIC!

WE HAD TO OPEN UP A LITTLE BIT OF THE MARQUEE TO LET SOME LIGHT IN.

DOESN'T IT, BOYS?

IT GETS TERRIBLE WHEN YOUR PERFOR-MANCE DOESN'T CATCH THE AUDIENCE'S ATTENTION!

WE'VE BEEN IN THAT SITUATION ONCE BEFORE...

YEAH..

THEY WERE LOOKING BORED AND DEPRESSED ...

APPLAUSE WAS RARE.

BUT NO ONE WOULD MOVE.

WE COULD HEAR PEOPLE WHISPERING IN THE AUDIENCE.

HMMMMM

WHOAAAA!

WHAT A NIGHTMARE!

YES?

...BY THE WAY, BOYS!

HMM!

WE'LL THINK ABOUT THAT TOMORROW.

OKAY... ENOUGH FOR TODAY! LET'S GO TO BED.

GLNG GLNG

MS. FUSAE'S FATHER INSISTED ON REWARDING YOU WITH A LITTLE MONEY...

TO THANK YOU FOR SAVING HIS DAUGHTER.

TE-TE-TEN THOUSAND YEN?!? WHERE DID YOU GET THAT, BOSS?!

FLAP

SHIRO-GANE! LET'S HAVE A DRINK!

SO I'LL KEEP THE REST FOR NOW.

YEHAAA!

IN FACT, HE GAVE ME MORE BUT I DON'T WANT YOU TO WASTE IT ALL TONIGHT...

YOU'RE NOT PAYING ATTENTION!

MEXICO

...TO THE PUBLIC BATHS?!

LONG

I TOLD MASARU I'D TAKE HIM TO THE PUBLIC BATHS.

I CAN'T

IS A 14-YEAR-OLD GIRL ALLOWED TO HAVE ALCOHOL IN JAPAN?

So, you're only 14?!?

WHAT ABOUT YOU TARANDA?!

BOXING

MEXICO

I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF YOUR WHINING!!

I'LL STAY HERE AND THINK ABOUT OUR SHOW.

YOU GO SOMEWHERE ELSE TO WASTE YOUR MONEY!!

VLING

THANK YOU. TAKE YOUR TIME...

Public Baths

THERMAL INSTITUTION

BUT... IT WAS IN NARUMI'S BATHROOM! AT THE PUBLIC BATHS, MEN AND WOMEN ARE SEPARATE!

I'VE ALREADY WASHED YOUR BACK ONCE. I CAN DO IT AGAIN.

THIS WAY.

HEY, SHIRO-GANE! WAIT A MINUTE!

TAN TAN TAN

THAT CAN'T BE! IT'S FORBID-DEN!

In a bath all together and naked.

WE NEVER KNOW WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN TO YOU, YOUNG MASTER. I'D FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE IF YOU'D STAY WITH ME...

...LET'S GO, TARANDA...

HMM?

BLOG

LET'S MEET HERE IN THE HALLWAY AFTER THE BATH!

YOUNG MASTER ...

Naked.

YES. IT DOESN'T WORK ANYMORE. IT WON'T MAKE ANY SOUNDS...

YOU'RE THROWING IT AWAY?

...

WHAT A PITY...

IT'S IN THE WAY, BUT I PUT IT THERE FOR THE GARBAGE COLLEC-TION.

YES...

THAT'S AN ACCOR-DION!

FLICH FLICH

TZON

HMM!

TZON

HMM! FEELS GOOD!

TAKING A WARM BATH...

FLOTCH

RRAAW

SPLASH!

WE DON'T HAVE A PLACE OR EQUIPMENT...

WHAT CAN WE POSSIBLY DO FOR OUR CIRCUS?

DON DON

HUP!

SPLAF

WON'T BE EASY...

FRLASH

FRL

AH. .

JUST DO AS I DO...

EVERY-BODY'S WATCHING US.

SO THIS IS WHAT JAPANESE PUBLIC BATHS LOOK LIKE .

YES, AND THERE ARE VERY FEW OF THEM REMAINING NOWADAYS

DON

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

...

...YOU HAVE TO WASH YOUR SOAP OFF CAREFULLY BEFORE GETTING IN THE BATH.

FLAC

NOT AT ALL! IT DOESN'T BOTHER ME AT ALL!

BUT FOR YOU, TARANDA, WHO'S ALWAYS BEEN WORKING IN A GREAT CIRCUS, IT MIGHT BE EMBARRASSING.

A LONG TIME AGO, WHILE I WAS IN FRANCE, I USED TO WORK IN A CIRCUS THAT DIDN'T HAVE MUCH MONEY EITHER.

I DON'T KNOW... ALL I CARE ABOUT IS MASARU'S HAPPINESS.

WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO FOR THE NAKAMACHI CIRCUS?

WAAH!

FLOUGH

YOU MANAGED TO CONQUER YOUR FEARS. CONGRATULATIONS.

I TOTALLY LOST MY SELF-CONFIDENCE... I EVEN THOUGHT I'D NEVER BE ABLE TO DO IT AGAIN.

HEY! BRAT! YOU JUST SPLASHED ME!

...

WHAT'RE YOU GONNA DO ABOUT THAT NOW?!

OH? THAT'S THE FIRST TIME I'VE SUPPORTED SOMEONE OTHER THAN MASARU!

THANK YOU, SHIRO-GANE...

MASTER !!

SPLA AHH

BRAT?!

SHIRO-GANE! NO!

SLAM

I'M SORRY ...

UHH..

SPLAOUF!

SMASH

I..
UHH.

IT'S HARD BEING A KID WITH SUCH A CRUEL DAD, ISN'T IT?

POF

I CAN SEE YOUR FATHER DIDN'T GO EASY ON YOU!

HEY, YOU! GET YOUR HANDS OFF YOUNG MASTER MASARU RIGHT NOW!

DAN

True!...

Yeah.

OUU UUFF FF

I'LL BREAK YOUR ARMS IF I HAVE TO! AM I CLEAR?

STOP IT, SHIROGANE!

GET AWAY FROM YOUNG MASTER MASARU !!

DADAN

IT'S OKAY! THAT MAN WASN'T DOING ANYTHING BAD!

SHI-SHI-SHIROGANE ?!??

OYABUN

WHAAAA!!

ZOING

GET DOWN!

PFUAAAHH

AH!

ARE YOU SURE THIS MAN DIDN'T HURT YOU, YOUNG MASTER?!

I TOLD YOU, I'M FINE!

I'VE GOT THIS FEELING OF "DEJÀ VU"...

WEIRD...

IN A SHOW WHICH HAD...

I-REMEMBER!... IT WAS ON TV...

Hey! Don't look at us!

...PUPPETS.

HERE COME HIRO AND NORI.

LOOK!

I THINK IN THE END WE SPENT MUCH MORE TIME PLAYING THAN DRINKING...

BOXING

MEXICO

HEY! WATCH THOSE GUYS COMING OUT OF THE PUBLIC BATHS... DID YOU SEE THEIR FACES?!

PUBLIC BATHS

THERMAL INSTITUTION

YOU'VE WON SOME TOO, HAVEN'T YOU?

HIRO, WHAT'RE YOU GONNA DO WITH ALL THE TOYS YOU WON?

IT'S SOME STUFF WE WON.

HEY! WHERE DID YOU GET THOSE TOYS?

BOXING

I WOULD HAVE LOVED TO BE THERE!

SO! HOW WAS THE BATH?

YOU SHOULD'VE SEEN IT! SHIROGANE WAS...

BOXING

HE'S HAD A VERY GOOD IDEA FOR OUR CIRCUS.

WHY'S HE SAYING THAT?

THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT WE NEED!

GREAT!

AND THAT LITTLE "SUSPENDED PIANO" SHALL HELP US, TOO!

YES!

IS THAT TRUE, MASARU?

AT THE BATH, WHILE I WAS WATCHING SHIROGANE AND TARANDA, I THOUGHT WE COULD USE...

...DOLLS!

ACT VI : CIRCUS * NAKAMACHI CIRCUS

FIRST CHAPTER

NAKAMA
CIRCUS
Bring your pets
3 pm in the big public park
WHAT A SHAME! THIS FLYER'S HANDMADE AND PHOTO-COPIED...
THEY'LL NEVER MAKE IT!
THIS IS THE PLACE ...
TAN

WE MUST MAKE SHIROGANE COME BACK WITH US AT ANY COST!!
But.. that hurt!!

NAOTA, YOU'RE SO STUPID! WE DIDN'T COME HERE JUST TO WATCH THE NAKAMACHIS!
BUT, DAD! WE DIDN'T NEED TO COME HERE TO KNOW THEY WERE GOING TO DO A LAME SHOW!
SP AAF

THAT'S TRUE... ALL THE SPECTATORS WERE AMAZED!

YOU SAW IT YOURSELF WHEN YOU PERFORMED WITH HER THE OTHER DAY...

SHIROGANE'S EVEN MORE WONDERFUL THAN WHEN SHE USED TO BE IN OUR CIRCUS!

CONCLUSION: SHIROGANE HAS AN AMAZING POTENTIAL TO GATHER PEOPLE IN A CIRCUS!

AND YOU SAW HOW DISAPPOINTED THEY WERE WHEN THEY LEARNED SHE WOULDN'T BE PERFORMING IN OUR CIRCUS ANYMORE!

ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THEY SUCCEED, WE'LL END UP IN HELL!

LISTEN... IF THE NAKAMACHI CIRCUS FAILS, WE'LL BE ABLE TO GET SHIROGANE BACK!

NAOTA! YOU'RE SAYING THAT AS IF IT DIDN'T CONCERN YOU! ALTHOUGH YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S WASTING ALL OUR MONEY AT THE CASINO!

YOU'RE RIGHT, AND ON TOP OF THAT, THE STRAW CIRCUS IS GOING BANKRUPT.

HE HE!!... THAT WOULD BE LIKE HEAVEN!!

ZOH ZOH

AND YOU'LL HAVE ANOTHER CHANCE TO MARRY HER!

WITH SHIROGANE, WE'LL MAKE SO MUCH MONEY!

ZOH

BUT, DAD! YOU'RE SPENDING AT LEAST AS MUCH AS I DO TO GO SEE YOUR GIRLS!

SNNH!

IT DOESN'T LOOK VERY CROWDED...

LOOK BOYS .. THERE'S AN OLD MAN OVER THERE...

THAT OLD MAN HAS ALWAYS BEEN FOND OF CIRCUSES. HE'S EAGERLY WAITING FOR TODAY'S SHOW.

A FEW MOMENTS AGO I SAW A MAN STOPPING BY, BUT HE MUST HAVE THOUGHT THERE COULDN'T BE A CIRCUS HERE SO HE LEFT IMMEDIATELY.

PEOPLE HERE HAVE NEVER HEARD OF THE NAKAMACHI CIRCUS... AND THIS FLYER ISN'T REALLY FLASHY...

SPOT

WAITING FOR THE CIRCUS ..

HE'S JUST LIKE US

YEAH, YOU'RE PROBABLY RIGHT...

WILL AN OLD MAN LIKE HIM BE OK WITH A CHEAP SHOW? HE MUST HAVE SEEN QUITE A LOT OF THEM.

I HEARD MASARU SAYING THE NAKAMACHI CIRCUS HADN'T GOT MUCH MONEY...

OOF

I'M TIRED OF WAITING. LET'S GO KARAOKE.

THIS MUST BE SOMETHING FOR KIDS. THEY'LL JUST TELL A STORY.

IS IT REALLY POSSIBLE TO PERFORM SOMETHING WITH NO INFRASTRUCTURE LIKE THIS??!?

YEAH. LET'S GO TO YOUR HOUSE.

HOW BORING! NOTHING'S HAPPENING!

I HAD TO TAKE HIM OUT FOR A WALK!

HEY, WHY DID YOU BRING YOUR MAD DOG WITH YOU?!

STOP IT JACK! I'M SICK OF YOU BARKING AT EVERYBODY LIKE THIS!!

AH!

OAF

OAF

REALLY?... "BRING YOUR PETS!"

DID YOU SEE? THERE'S SOMETHING STRANGE WRITTEN ON THE FLYER...

WHY WOULD THEY WRITE THAT?

YES, I HAD NOTHING SPECIAL TO DO TODAY.

HEY! MRS IDA! YOU CAME WITH YOUR CAT?

AND THEY DON'T EVEN HAVE SEATS FOR THE AUDIENCE.

HA HA HA! SO LAME!

IT'S A MERE ALARM CLOCK RINGING! THIS IS HOW THEY'RE STARTING THEIR SHOW?!

I HOPE, FOR YOUR SAKE, THAT THEY FORGET!

I TOLD SEVERAL FRIENDS TO COME SAYING IT'D BE COOL...

FHHHH

WHAT A GONG!

DIIIING

HO!.. IT'S STARTING!

DAAA

HERE! YOU TOLD ME YOU KNEW HOW TO...

...USE IT

ARE YOU SURE...

THIS IS GONNA BE ALRIGHT?!

LISTEN MASARU .. DO YOU REALLY THINK IT'S POSSIBLE TO SET UP A SHOW THAT EASILY?

THAT'LL MAKE US SOME MUSIC FOR THE SHOW.

SHIROGANE FOUND IT.

AN ACCORDION?! WHERE DID YOU GET IT?

ANYWAY, I DON'T THINK WE HAVE MUCH CHOICE.

YOU SAID IT WORKED FOR THE STREET ARTISTS... AND YOU SAW WHAT SHIROGANE'S CAPABLE OF!

OF COURSE!

MASARU... I'M PRETTY WORRIED!

MASARU'S RIGHT. WE DON'T HAVE ANY OTHER OPTION...

LOOK AT ME: FOLLOWING THE ADVICE OF A BOY WHO KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT THE CIRCUS!

DAMN! THAT JERK MITSU'USHI AND HIS SON ARE HERE!

DO YOU HONESTLY BELIEVE...

...WE HAVE ANY CHANCE TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

YOU CAN DO IT, MASARU!

CLAP CLAP

...WILL NOW BEGIN!

THE NAKAMACHI CIRCUS SHOW...

Hello Everyone

...THERE WAS A BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS, WHO LIVED IN A KINGDOM FAR AWAY.

ONCE UPON A TIME...

RLOMM

AND THE BACK-GROUND'S MADE OF PAPER!

HAVE YOU SEEN THE PUPPETS?! THEY'RE LIKE THE ONES YOU CAN WIN AT THE FUNFAIR!

THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE CIRCUS!

I WAS WONDERING WHAT THEY WERE GONNA DO!

HEHEHE!

THIS IS SHIRO-GANE'S VOICE!

THIS IS A SIMPLE PUPPET SHOW FOR KIDS!

SOMETIMES, SHE WOULD COME OUT OF THE CASTLE...

THE PRINCESS WAS VERY KIND.

HEY! COME BACK HERE JACK!

SO... ARE WE GETTING OUTTA HERE OR WHAT?

..TO PLAY WITH THE CATS AND DOGS OF THE CITY.

VWOOM

COME BACK!

BAT-ATAN

KITTY, WAIT!

HEY! WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM?!

... AND THE ANIMALS ARE FOND OF HER AS WELL!

AS YOU CAN SEE, THE PRINCESS LOVES THE ANIMALS

THEY'RE ALL RUNNING TOWARDS THE TRUCK!

SAH

UNBELIEVABLE! NORMALLY, JACK WOULD NEVER GET CLOSE TO ANYONE OUTSIDE MY FAMILY!!

YEAH! SO CUTE!!

WHOAA... YOU SEE THAT GIRL?!

I WANT TO BE CLOSER TO WATCH THIS!

TON

HA HA!

I THOUGHT MY KITTY WOULD ONLY OBEY ME!!

MY GOD! MY CAT CAN DO THAT?!

THEY'VE NEVER BEEN TRAINED... TO DO ANY-THING!

THESE ARE JUST COMMON PETS!

THAT'S IMPOS-SIBLE!

...AS A TAMER OF THE GREAT LONG CIRCUS.

I REMEMBER . HE TOLD ME THE GIRL INTRODUCED HERSELF...

YES ...

DAD... THAT GIRL WAS AT OUR CIRCUS THE OTHER DAY TOO!

DO YOU REMEMBER?! SHE LED YAMASHITA'S DOGS AS IF THEY WERE HERS.

EXACTLY... IF WE MANAGE TO MAKE THESE POOR AMATEURS FAIL, WE'LL GET TWO GREAT ARTISTS FOR OUR CIRCUS INSTEAD OF ONE!!

THEN... IT MEANS...

WHAT?! YOU MEAN THAT GREAT AMERICAN CIRCUS?!

I HOPE MASARU'LL LIKE MY PERFOR-MANCE.

YOU'RE VERY TALENTED, TARANDA!

THEY SAY YOU NEED A LOT OF TIME AND PATIENCE TO DO A SHOW WITH ANIMALS...

WHEREAS YOU CAN MAKE CATS AND DOGS FOLLOW YOU AS SOON AS THEY SEE YOU!

BUT TO JUST MAKE ANIMALS RUN IN A GIVEN DIRECTION, THEY WILL WILLINGLY DO IT JUST BY LOOKING AT MY EYES.

PRACTICE AND LOVE.

THAT'S WHAT YOU NEED TO MAKE A GREAT SHOW!

THE "CHARMING EYES?"

THERE ONCE WAS A MAN WHO TOLD MY MOTHER THAT...

...TO BECOME A GREAT TAMER YOU'D NEED WHAT HE CALLED THE "CHARMING EYES."

I DON'T REALLY KNOW IF I HAVE THAT LOOK, BUT I'VE BEEN RAISED AND TRAINED TO BE A TAMER SINCE I WAS A CHILD...

... THEN, MAYBE ...

IT'S A SPECIAL LOOK IN YOUR EYES THAT INSTANTLY MAKES ANIMALS TRUST YOU...

...AND ALLOWS YOU TO COMMAND THEM SMOOTHLY, THANKS TO AN "ABSOLUTE" CHARISMA.

IT'LL BE PERFECT!

YOU CAN DO IT!

WE NEED YOU TARANDA.

I KNOW YOU HAVE THAT LOOK! THERE'S NO DOUBT ABOUT THAT!

BEAST! STOP!

I DON'T KNOW IF I'LL BE ABLE TO DO IT...

...BUT I SWEAR, I'LL DO MY BEST, MASARU!

WHAT?!

COME ON, LET'S GET CLOSER!

THAT GIRL'S SO CUTE!

TAN-TAN TAAN

THE HAT'S HEADING TOWARDS ...

...A YOUNG MAN WHO SEEMS TO BE BUSY WORKING!

WHAAA

HO! LOOKS LIKE A BAD WIND GOT THE PRINCESS HAT!

WOOW!!

VVHHH

HE'S A CHIMNEY SWEEP.

HO!

HO!

THAT'S FUNNY!

HEY, LOOK.

DESPITE ALL THAT, HE'S ALWAYS HAPPY AND LOVES HIS WORK.

BRLOM

HE'S POOR, AND A LITTLE CLUMSY TOO.

WELL, THAT'S WEIRD!

WHAT'S GOING ON? A HAT FELL FROM THE SKY!

THANKS A LOT.

HO! THANK YOU MISTER! YOU GOT MY HAT BACK!

IT'S MASARU!

TON

COME ON, LET'S GO!

I WANNA GO! I'M BORED!

THIS IS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT! THE YOUNG MAN FALLS IN LOVE WITH THE PRINCESS...

FLAP

SUDDENLY, BAD CLOUDS DARKEN THE SKY.

GOOOHH

...WHO'S BEEN TRYING TO SEDUCE THE PRINCESS FOR A LONG TIME?

ARE THESE DARK SIGNS ANOUNCING THE ARRIVAL OF THE SNAKE KING...

ZAAN ZAZANN ZOON ZAZAAN

SH

DO YOU SEE THOSE CLOTHES?!

WOAA!

WOAA! HOW CLASSY!

YES! WE MUST STOP THEM AT ANY COST!

DAD! IT'S AWFUL!.. PEOPLE ARE LIKING IT!

PRINCESS. TODAY, YOU'RE FINALLY GOING TO BE MINE!

THAT'S MY WISH!

...THE SNAKE KING HAS JUST MADE HIS EN-TRANCE!!

ACT VI: CIRCUS
* NAKAMACHI CIRCUS
"SECOND CHAPTER"

I HAVE COME HERE TO GET YOU ONCE AND FOR ALL!

HE HE HE... PRINCESS!

I, THE SNAKE KING, SHALL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO SUCCEED!

MISTER CHIMNEY SWEEP, THAT KING'S EVIL!

HE'S BEEN HARASSING ME FOR A VERY LONG TIME!

THE SNAKE KING IS SO HANDSOME !!

HEEHEE... THAT BRUNETTE'S SO HOT!

I'D LIKE TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS NEXT.

YOU THINK SO? I DON'T KNOW...

LOOKS LIKE IT'S GETTING INTEREST-ING...

HMM!

DAD, THIS IS TERRIBLE !

YES! COME HERE! IT'S FUNNIER THAN I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE! AND MY CAT'S IN THE SHOW!

HMMM...?! IS THAT A CIRCUS?

BUT THAT'S THE WHOLE IDEA BEHIND THE GREAT STREET SHOW MADE BY BUSKERS: PEOPLE BRINGING IN OTHER PEOPLE AND SO ON.... WE MUST PREVENT THEM FROM GATHERING A CROWD!

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! THESE MERE RUMORS ARE BRINGING PEOPLE IN TO WATCH THAT CRAPPY SHOW NAKAMACHI SET UP!

...BRING SHIROGANE AND THAT YOUNG TAMER INTO OUR CIRCUS!!

ONCE WE DO, WE'LL BE ABLE TO...

WE HAVE TO DESTROY THE NAKA-MACHI CIRCUS!

...THEY MUST BE PLOTTING SOME-THING!

WHAT'S GOING ON WITH THOSE TWO?

ZAAAN

ZAAAN

ZAAAN

HOP

HOP

BUT BOSS, IT'S ALMOST OUR TURN!

I CAN'T STOP PLAYING THE ACCORDION! SO YOU GUYS HAVE TO HANDLE IT!

WHAT ?

NORI, HIRO! GO SEE WHAT THEY'RE UP TO!

HED

...AND AFTER THAT, THE THREE OF US WILL GO TO THE SNAKE KING'S CASTLE IN ORDER TO RESCUE THE PRINCESS!

...THEN WE, THE DOG AND THE CAT, ARE SUPPOSED TO GO CHEER MASARU UP...

THE SNAKE KING'S ABOUT TO KIDNAP THE PRINCESS...

3

2

1

HOP

HMM...

BESIDES, WITH THESE COSTUMES, WE WON'T BE ABOUT TO SNEAK AROUND DISCREETLY!

THEY WOULDN'T ...

FIRECRACKERS!

BE CAREFUL NOT TO AIM AT THE AUDIENCE, NAOTA!

PSCHU

ONCE WE SET OFF THESE LITTLE THINGS, THE NAKAMACHI ADVENTURES WILL BE OVER!

OH, NO!!

FIRE IN THE HOLE!

AAH

DA-DA-DAN

HHHHHH

THERE'S STILL ONE LEFT!!

WOOSH

DAPA-PA

PA

PAAH

ZOOM

YAAAAY!

LET'S DO THIS!

HIRO!

DAN

WHOOPS!

BOLTON

DON'T EVER TRY TO DO THIS, KIDS! (NORI)

SPLAT

MEXICO

BOXING

...
NOW
...

WHAT SHALL WE DO? NOTHING MAKES SENSE ANY-MORE...

HIRO AND NORI SHOULDN'T BE HERE... THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO COME IN LATER
...

...
EHH
?!

YOU JUST TRIED TO MAKE ME DISAPPEAR WITH THOSE MAGICAL WEAPONS, DIDN'T YOU?!

ZANN

HEY, YOU! YOU'RE THE SNAKE KING'S HENCHMEN!

WHAT?!

BUT YOU'VE FAILED!

DAH

DAH

MEXICO

BOXING

DAH

YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT THE CAT AND THE DOG ARE MY BEST FRIENDS AND THE PRINCESS VISITS THEM EVERY DAY! THEY SWORE THEY WOULD PROTECT ME, TOO!

SO, BACK OFF!

YOU! MANAGED TO CHANGE THE SITUATION TO OUR ADVANTAGE!

BOO

LET'S ENLARGE THE PERFOR-MANCE RING A LITTLE BIT!

MEOW!

BITE!

GOOD DOG, NOT CAT!

DAAH BOXING

HE HE!

HA HA HA!

YEP! HOW LAME!

DID YOU SEE HOW THOSE TWO IDIOTS WERE RUNNING?!

THE STORY'S COOL.

IT'S TRUE, THEY ARE REALLY FUNNY.

HA HA HA!

THEY GOT THEM!

BRAVO!

HA HA HA!

THANK YOU, MASARU! YOU SAVED US!

...HE DIDN'T PANIC AT ALL DURING THE INCIDENT!

EVEN THOUGH HE ISN'T FAMILIAR WITH CIRCUS PER-FORMANCES ...

...REACTED FASTER THAN ANY OF US!

EVERYBODY WAS SHOCKED, BUT MASTER MASARU...

...STOP THAT NONSENSE, MASARU!

WHY WOULD YOU WANT US TO MAKE THAT "PUPPET SHOW"?

MEXICO

BASTARDS!

BESIDES, I'VE ALREADY SEEN STORY-TELLING PERFORMANCES THAT HELP MAKE A TRANSI-TION BETWEEN NUMBERS, BUT I COULD NEVER GET USED TO IT!

WE'RE ARTISTS WITH DIFFERENT TALENTS!

...PEOPLE WILL BE HAPPY? AND ALL THE CHILDREN WILL STAY UNTIL THE END?... IS THAT WHAT YOU THINK?

SO, WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS THAT IF WE MAKE IT FUNNY...

MAYBE... BUT WE DON'T HAVE A MARQUEE, SO THE SPECTATORS CAN LEAVE WHENEVER THEY FEEL LIKE IT...

WE HAVE TO MAKE EVERYTHING SO THAT WE CAN KEEP THEIR ATTENTION UNTIL THE VERY END.

MOREOVER, WE'LL PERFORM IN A PARK, SO THERE'LL PROBABLY BE LOTS OF CHILDREN...

I CAN GUARANTEE IT!

YES!

I KNOW WE CAN DO IT!

HE'S JUST A KID...

BUT HE'S QUITE SMART!

THAT'S WHAT HE TOLD US ...

AND I'VE COME TO TRUST HIM!

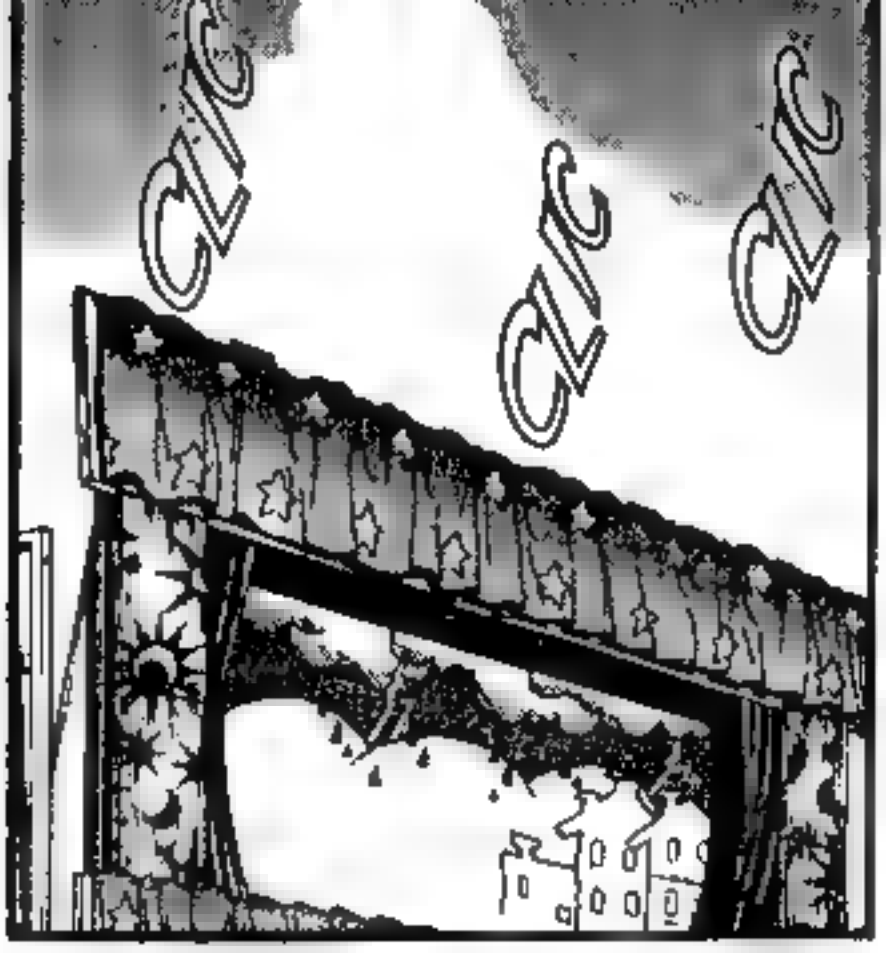
AH .. YES!

SHIROGANE... I THINK WE CAN CONTINUE NOW...

REALLY STRONG!

THAT MASARU IS...

SUDDENLY, ANOTHER ONE OF THE SNAKE KING'S ALLIES, ONE MUCH MORE TERRIFYING THAN THE TWO FOOLS WE JUST SAW, WENT INTO ACTION...


arc arc

arc arc
YES!
BIG BRO!
WHAT'S THAT NOISE?
HMM?
SPOT!

THAT'S ARLEQUIN!
DOOK

...WHAT'S THAT THING?!
WO .. OWWW!

TAN

VOOM!

...MASARU! UMM, SORRY... MISTER CHIMNEY SWEEP!!

PRINCESS!... NOOO!!

VLOOP

BLAANG

...COME TO THE SNAKE CASTLE!

IF YOU WISH TO SAVE HER ...

HE HE HE...

YOUNG MAN, THE PRINCESS SHALL BE MINE!

SAH

ZOOM

BRAVO!!

CLAP CLAP

YES!

THAT WAS FUNNY!

HO

YES!... AND THEY'RE EVEN CLAPPING!

PEOPLE ARE BECOMING MORE AND MORE INTERESTED IN OUR SHOW!

THAT'S IT!

THERE ARE MORE AND MORE!

MORE PEOPLE ARE COMING!

...THE NAKAMACHI CIRCUS IS FINALLY GATHERING PEOPLE AGAIN!

BOXING

AND NOW...

...OUR STORY CONTINUES IN THE SNAKE KING'S CASTLE...

!

... BUT I...

YOU'VE MANAGED TO COME THIS FAR ...

...WE'RE GETTING TO THE CLIMAX!

WHAAAT?!

HMM?!

NO WAY! THEY TOOK OUR SPEAKERS!

MEXICO

ACT-VI: CIRCUS * NAKAMACHI CIRCUS

"THIRD CHAPTER"

OUAH!

BOXING

ZON

BOXING

GIVE GIVE GIVE

BOING

WHOAA! A BUCKET FELL ON MY HEAD!

CLAP CLAP

AIR

MEXICO

BRAVO

BRAVO!

CLAP

CLAP

YES I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!

THE PEOPLE SEEM TO BE HAVING FUN!

THEY LURED THE CHILDREN WITH THEIR PUPPETS AND THEN ...

MAYBE... BUT THE NAKAMACHIS HAVE HAD SOME GOOD IDEAS!

HOWEVER, THAT SHOW'S NOTHING! WE CAN'T EVEN CALL THAT A CIRCUS!

THEY'RE ALL APPLAUDING!

I THOUGHT THEY WERE STUBBORN AND WOULD THEN HAVE TROUBLE HANDLING THAT SITUATION..

. BUT I WAS WRONG!

THEY ALSO CLEVERLY USED ITS CABLES BY CONNECTING THEM TO THEIR TRUCK AND THAT TREE ...

THEY MANAGED TO USE SHIROGANE'S GIANT PUPPET TO FILL IN FOR THE R LACK OF EQUIPMENT.

...AS THE STORY PROGRESSES, THEY USE PUPPETS IN ORDER TO INTRODUCE THEIR OWN NUMBERS.

EVEN THOUGH I DIDN'T BELIEVE IT WOULD WORK!

IN SPITE OF OUR SITUATION, OUR LACK OF MONEY AND EQUIPMENT,

HE CONVINCED ME TO SET UP THAT SHOW, AS YOU CAN SEE...

MASARU'S THE ONE WHO CAME UP WITH THE IDEA FOR THIS SHOW...

YES?

YOU KNOW, TARANDA...

UNBE-LIEV-ABLE, ISN'T IT?

ABSO-LUTELY!

I TOTALLY AGREE WITH YOU!

...YES!

THAT KID'S...

...CUT OUT TO BE A GREAT CIRCUS PER-FORMER.

YES!

THIS IS THEIR FINAL FIGHT, ISN'T IT?

OTHER-WISE, WE SHALL KILL YOU! WE'VE ALREADY SAVED THE PRINCESS!

SURRENDER, SNAKE KING!

I'M SAYING WE SHOULD BORROW THEIR EQUIP-MENT...

WHAT? WHAT'RE YOU SAYING, DAD?

HA HA HA! YOU THINK THAT YOU CAN BEAT ME?

HEY! THEY STOLE OUR SPEAKERS!

THEY'RE GETTING AWAY!

!

ZZNN

...WHICH THEY DON'T NEED ANYMORE!

TAN TAN TAN

COME BACK HERE!

...BRING THEM BACK!!

WE MUST HOLD ON UNTIL HIRO AND NORI...

...WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO?

WITHOUT THE SPEAKERS, WE CAN'T TELL OUR STORY ANYMORE...

SNAKE KING! YOU'RE A COWARD! HOW COULD YOU ORDER YOUR MEN TO STEAL OUR "VOICES"?!!

I'VE GOT AN IDEA!

WELL DONE, MASARU! GOOD IDEA!

ZAAN ZAAN ZAAN ZON

AH.

VVOM

DAAH

H

THIS MAGIC SWORD...

SHALL LEAD US TO VICTORY!

...TAKE OUT THE PLASTIC ROSE YOU'VE GOT IN YOUR POCKET!

SHIRO-GANE...

YOUNG MASTER... WHAT SHOULD I DO?

YAAAA!

TAN TAN TAN

DAN

TA

SAH...

BOXING

BA TA TAN

WHY DOESN'T HE HIT THE SNAKE KING?

A ROSE?... BUT...

YOU'RE SO RIDICU-LOUS!!

...

TAK

OKAY! SOUND'S BACK!

THIS FLOWER WHICH HAS BEEN BLOSSOMING IN MY HEART.

I WOULD REALLY HAVE LOVED TO SHOW THIS FLOWER TO THE PRINCESS...

AND HAVE HER COME TO MY CASTLE SO I COULD SHOW HER THIS FLOWER.

I WAS HOPING I COULD MARRY THE PRINCESS ...

THAT'S WHY NOBODY TRULY UNDERSTANDS MY HEART.

EVEN IF I INVITE PEOPLE, NO ONE EVER COMES...

I AM THE SNAKE KING AND BECAUSE OF THAT, NO ONE WOULD TALK TO ME.

DURING THESE LAST MOMENTS OF MY LIFE, I'D LIKE TO MAKE ONE LAST WISH...

BECAUSE I LOST, I HAVE TO PAY FOR ALL MY SINS... I UNDERSTAND NOW...

BUT, SHE'D NEVER EVEN LOOK AT IT...

BECAUSE I'D KIDNAPPED HER AND SHE WAS TOO SCARED.

...THAT HAS BLOOMED IN MY HEART!

PLEASE... LOOK AT THIS FLOWER...

I THINK I'D AGREE TO LOOK AT THE FLOWER!

THAT SNAKE KING'S NOT SO BAD, AFTER ALL!

SO, THAT'S IT?!... HE JUST WANTED TO SHOW HER A FLOWER?!

SPOT

I THINK I'VE ALWAYS KNOWN SUCH A FLOWER WAS BLOSSOM-ING IN YOUR HEART...

...

THE PRINCESS SAID, "MY POOR KING...

OH! ...MY PRINCESS !

TO PAY FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE, YOU'RE GOING TO...

...COME LIVE WITH ME IN MY CASTLE IN ORDER TO HELP ME GOVERN THE COUNTRY"

THIS FLOWER IS SO BEAUTIFUL, YOUR HEART CAN'T BE AS DARK AS PEOPLE THINK IT IS...

THAT'S HOW THE FIGHT AGAINST THE SNAKE KING CAME TO AN END...

...WE NEED MUSIC FOR THE "HAPPY ENDING"!

HOO!

NICELY DONE! THEY MANAGED TO HANDLE THAT SITUATION!

WHAT ABOUT THE CHIMNEY SWEEP THEN? WHAT'S HE GONNA DO?

... REALLY?

BEFORE PEOPLE HAD NOTICED THAT HE WAS GONE, THE LITTLE CHIMNEY SWEEP WAS ALREADY WANDERING IN ANOTHER COUNTRY...

THE LITTLE CHIMNEY SWEEP HAD ALREADY LEFT.

THAT'S RIGHT! YOU FOUGHT FOR THE PRINCESS' SAKE!

WHERE ARE YOU GONNA GO NOW?!

BUT MY OWN PLACE WILL ALWAYS BE WHERE THERE ARE CHIMNEYS...

AND THE LITTLE CHIMNEY SWEEP ANSWERED, "I'M WANDERING FROM ROOF TO ROOF, FROM COUNTRY TO COUNTRY...

"WHY DIDN'T YOU STAY WITH THE PRINCESS IN HER COUNTRY?"

THE WIND ASKED HIM,

PRIN-
CESS!

SNIF

THAT'S WHY I CAN'T STAY WITH THE PRINCESS."

I'LL PRAY FOR YOUR HAPPINESS! BE HAPPY!

"THE LITTLE CHIMNEY SWEEP AND THE SNAKE KING."

TODAY'S SHOW, CALLED...

THIS IS THE END OF...

CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP

BRAVO BRAVO BRAVO

HOU RRA

FOR THE SNAKE KING'S MEN: MOROMI AND NAOTA MITSU'USHI

FOR THE CAT AND THE DOG: HIRO AND NORIYUKI

CLAP CLAP CLAP

MEXICO

PLAYING THE PRINCESS: MISS TARANDA LISELOTTE

CLAP

BOOO

DAMN!

PLAYING THE SNAKE KING, THE STORY TELLER OF OUR ADVENTURE AND MASTER OF THE GIANT PUPPET...

...MISS SHIROGANE!

CLAP CLAP

HOURRAA AA

AND FINALLY OUR LITTLE CHIMNEY SWEEP: MASARU!!

ACCORDION PLAYER: MYSELF, [illegible] NAKAMACHI

CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP

CLAP CLAP CLAP

YES.. THE OLD MAN WE SAW EARLIER...

ARE YOU LOOK-ING FOR SOME-ONE?

OKAY!

COME ON, YUMI! LET'S GO SEE MASARU AND THE OTHERS!

WE'D LIKE TO THANK YOU ALL FOR COMING HERE TODAY!

By the way...

Hmm

I WONDER IF HE LIKED TODAY'S SHOW OR NOT...

HE MUST'VE COME TODAY HOPING TO SEE A GOOD SHOW...

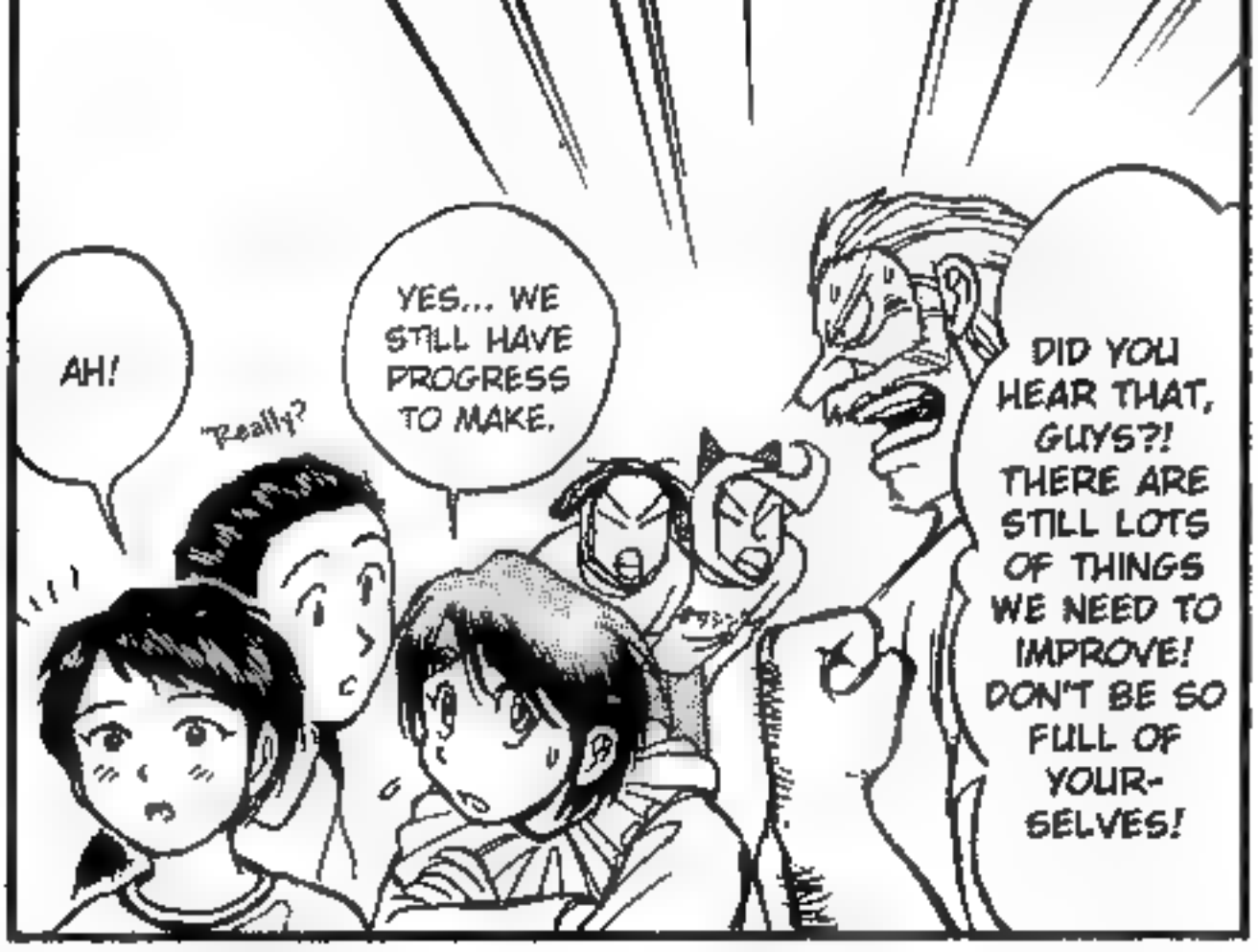
MOM SAID THAT HE LOVES THE CIRCUS AND THAT HE HAS SEEN LOTS OF THEM THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE...

THAT'S NORMAL. WHAT WE'VE DONE TODAY ISN'T REALLY WHAT WE USUALLY CALL A "CIRCUS."

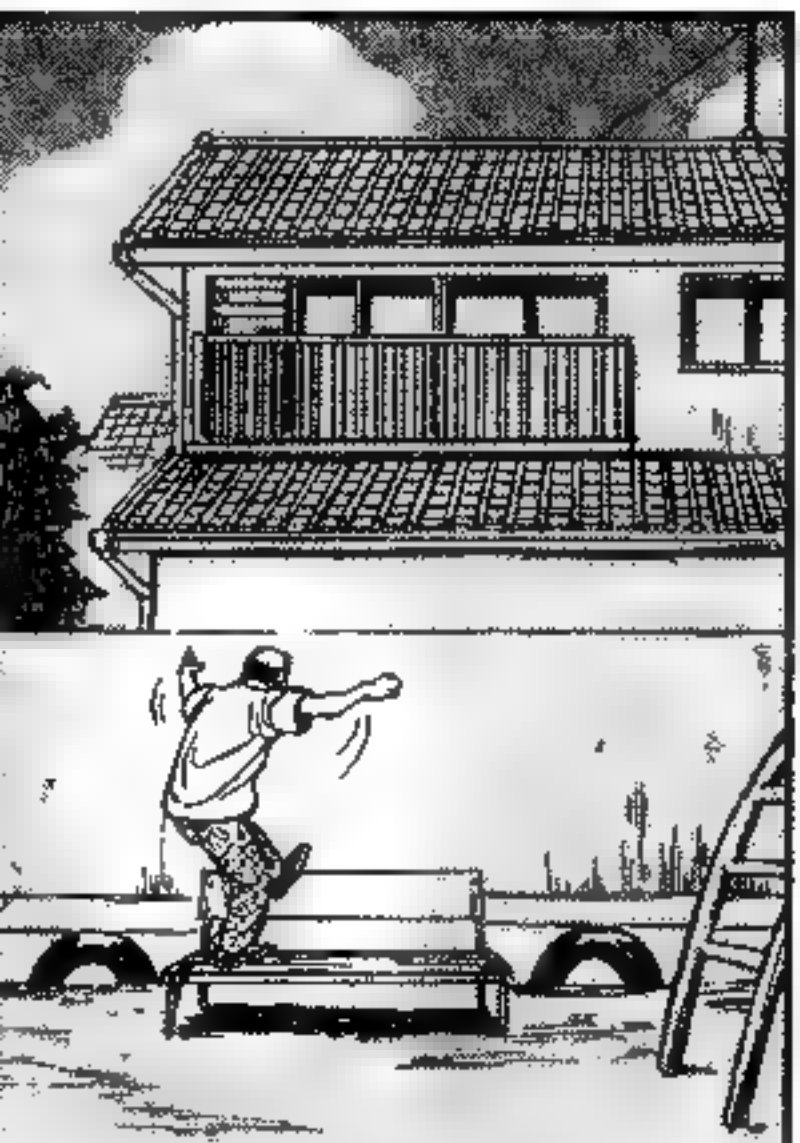
HMM ...

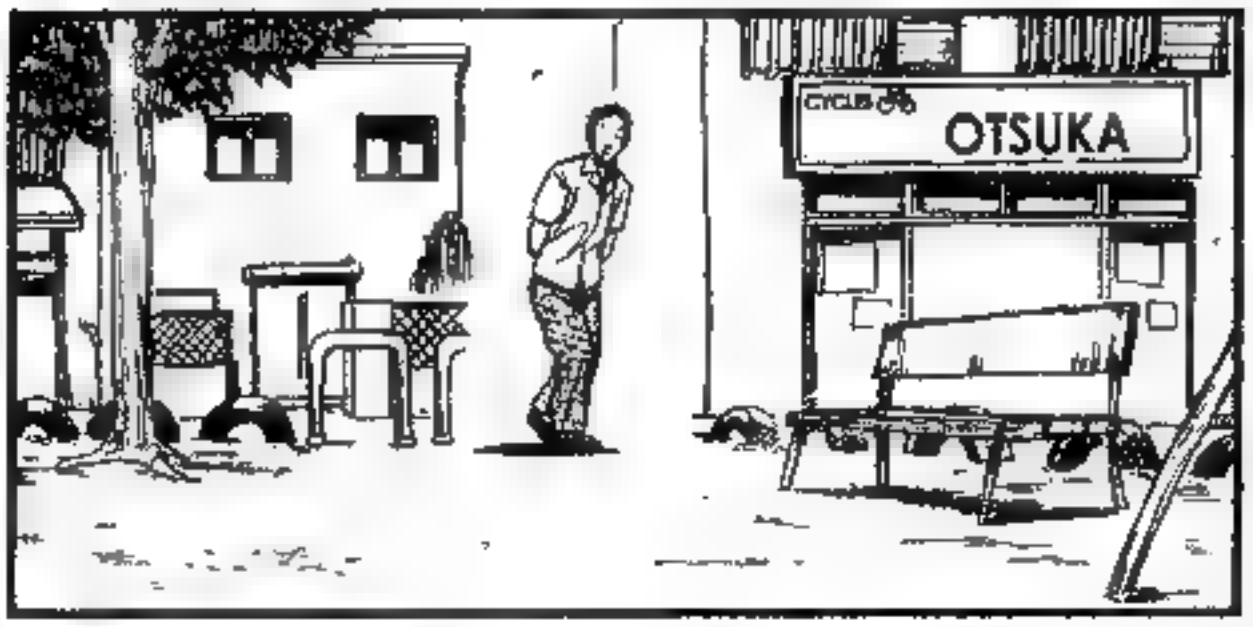
YES, I DID BUT HE WASN'T SMILING A LOT...

DID YOU WATCH HIM DURING THE SHOW, YUMI?


AH!
"Really?
YES... WE STILL HAVE PROGRESS TO MAKE.
DID YOU HEAR THAT, GUYS?! THERE ARE STILL LOTS OF THINGS WE NEED TO IMPROVE! DON'T BE SO FULL OF YOUR-SELVES!

YEP! IT REALLY GOT ME TOO!
OKAY... THAT WAS SOME CHILDISH STUFF, BUT...




CYCLE
OTSUKA

...HE DID LIKE THE SHOW!

HEY! IN THE END...

THE NAKAMACHI CIRCUS HAS BEEN GIVING PERFOR-MANCES REGULARLY ...

SINCE THAT DAY ...

TA N

THAT LITTLE FAMILY CIRCUS, THAT WAS ABOUT TO GO BANKRUPT, HAS FOUND HOPE AGAIN AND HAS STARTED TO BRING HAPPINESS TO A LOT OF PEOPLE.

...THANKS TO TWO PEOPLE WHO HAD EXPERIENCED EXTRAORDINARY THINGS

BY THE WAY...

ZZANN

ZZANN

ANOTHER STORY ...

FOR NOW, I'D LIKE TO TELL YOU...

WE'LL SOON BE SEEING MASARU AND THE NAKAMACHI CIRCUS AGAIN.

...AS YOU ALREADY KNOW, THIS BOOK'S TITLE IS "KARAKURI CIRCUS". KARAKURI MEANS "WITH ANY OLD THING" OR "SHATTERED."

STARTING IN THE NEXT CHAPTER OF "KARAKURI CIRCUS," WE SHALL FOLLOW ANOTHER "KARAKURI" TOGETHER.

...THAT IS DIRECTLY CONNECTED TO ARLEQUIN!

NOW...

DAH

I'M COMING!

WE'RE LEAVING MASARU!

URROMM

ZZAN N

...FOR A WHILE

...THE CURTAIN'S CLOSING ON OUR GREAT "CIRCUS" PERIOD

SSA

AAA

LLOF

CIRCUS

ACT ONE: A MAN
"THE CURTAIN RISES"

WHILE AGO, I HAD A CURIOUS DREAM...

ACT VII: KARAKURI ° A MAN

"THE CURTAIN RISES"

I WAS WATCHING A PARADE FROM A GREAT CIRCUS THAT I'D NEVER SEEN BEFORE

FROM A BIG ORGAN-LIKE INSTRUMENT, A SILVERY VAPOR WAS WAFTING OUT

...WHERE THERE WAS NOT A SOUL, WHERE ONLY THE WIND WAS BLOWING.

...SPREAD-ING OUT, DANCING THROUGH FARAWAY PLAINS...

PEOPLE SAY IT'S THE NOCTURNAL PARADE OF ALL THE DEAD CIRCUS ARTISTS...

...

I THINK I'VE HEARD ABOUT IT BEFORE.

WAF

...THAT WAS MY DREAM. PRETTY STRANGE, RIGHT?

AND THEY MOVE AT THEIR LEISURE WHILE SPREADING CLOUDS OF SILVERY SMOKE.

SOMETIMES, THEY EVEN WALK ON THE SEA OR IN THE DESERT...

THEY WALK AT NIGHT THROUGH ALL THE STREETS OF THE WORLD...

...

IT SEEMS TO BE A VERY POPULAR STORY TOLD AMONG CIRCUS ARTISTS.

IT WAS FATHER GORO WHO TOLD ME THIS A WHILE BACK, WHILE WE WERE BOTH WORKING AT THIS AMERICAN CIRCUS...

HMM

IN FRANCE, THE CIRCUS ARTISTS CALLED IT...

AH.. YES.

HM?

HOW ABOUT YOU, SHIROGANE? DID YOU HEAR THIS STORY IN FRANCE?

...LITERALLY...

..."THE MIDNIGHT CIRCUS."

CIRCUS?!

THE MIDNIGHT ...

VROOM

TUUT

BIIP

TAN

TAN

THE CITIZENS BANK

TA-HA-HA

HA-HA-HA-HA

ALRIGHT, LET'S ROLL!

HA-HA-HA!

MAN, WE JUST MADE 400,000 EUROS AT ONCE!

TAN TAN TAN

5-7-XE4

VRR AWAY

...WE'D BETTER GET OUTTA HERE QUICKLY!

PIF

PO F

HOP...

HOP...

POLOLON

HA HA HA! YOU REALLY SUCK!

YOU'RE NOT GONNA GET ANYONE'S ATTENTION LIKE THAT!

WE'VE SEEN YOU HERE EVERY DAY FOR AT LEAST A MONTH! NO ONE'S MAKING YOU DO IT!

BAH.. WHY D'YOU DO IT THEN ??!

SHUT UP!

I'M NOT DOIN' IT 'CAUSE I WANNA!

I DON'T LIKE JUGGLING!

IF YOU'RE HERE, IT'S TO PRACTICE YOUR SKILL! YOU'RE A JUGGLER, RIGHT?

BUT... I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYONE SUCK AS MUCH AS YOU!

...A BIT LIKE IN THE BEAUBOURG NEIGHBORHOOD...

THERE'S LOTS OF STREET ARTISTS PRACTICING HERE, LIKE YOU...

WHAT ARE YOU BABBLING ABOUT?!

I FEEL LIKE JUGGLING REALLY ISN'T WHAT I DO... I'M NOT A PROFESSIONAL JUGGLER, THAT'S FOR SURE!

HUH?

THAT'S WHAT I DON'T GET...

YEAH... THAT'S IT...

HEY, DON'T YOU THINK HE'S TOTALLY CRAZY?

He's so weird!

THIS GUY, I THINK HE'S A DOCTOR, TOLD ME TO KEEP ON PRACTICING UNTIL I GET MY MEMORIES BACK...

AND I LOST... PART OF MY MEMORIES...

I THINK... I HAD A BIG ACCIDENT...

HOP

HOP

AH! WELL, SEE YA, MISTER AMNESIAC JUGGLER!

HEY, JEAN! BERNARD IS IN A FIGHT!

BOTOTO/NN

AND... YOU DON'T REMEMBER AT ALL WHAT YOU DID BEFORE?

SO, IT'S LIKE A TREATMENT FOR YOU? THAT'S PRETTY COOL!

WE PROMISE! WE WON'T DO IT AGAIN!

SHUT UP! I TOLD YOU I'M NOT A JUGGLER!

...AND DON'T TRY TO STEAL A KNIFE FROM ANOTHER JUGGLER AGAIN, LIKE LAST TIME!

SOME IMAGES APPEAR BEFORE ME...

SOMETIMES...

DESPITE EVERYTHING...

...HIGH IN THE SKY...

...LIKE FLAMES...

WHY IS SHE CRYING?

WHO IS SHE CRYING FOR?

...WITH SILVERY EYES...

AND THEN... A FACE... A WOMAN...

...BIG WHIRLPOOLS...

I SEE COLLAPSING WALLS!...

AND ALSO...

...THIS SMILING BOY.

KRRROOMMM

!

I CAN'T REMEMBER WHO HE IS...

BUT... HIS SMILING FACE IS SO BRIGHT!

BLONG

SCRAM!

TTTK

SBAM

DONF

WHAT ?!?

HE HE HE!

H...HELP!!!

AH .

SAH...

JEAN!

SCHHA

AAHAA

...HUH ?!?

SAH...

TAN...

GET OUTTA THE WAY!

RRROOMM

RRROOMM

WATCH OUT!

BRLAAN

BAM

WHAM

...AND
MY NAME IS
NARUMI!

HA HA

TAN

I GOT MY MEMORY BACK!

TUU

TABAC

I'M ACTUALLY IN FRANCE.

GERMANY

FRANCE

SWITZER-LAND

ITALY

SPAIN

THANKS TO THAT SHOCK, EVERYTHING CAME BACK AT ONCE!

ACT VII: KARAKURI * A MAN "GUY RECH"

OUCH!

I'VE GOT CRAMPS ALL OVER! I'M HURTING EVERY-WHERE! BUT THAT'S GOTTA BE NORMAL... I JUST STOPPED A CAR DRIVING AT FULL SPEED WITH MY BARE HANDS!

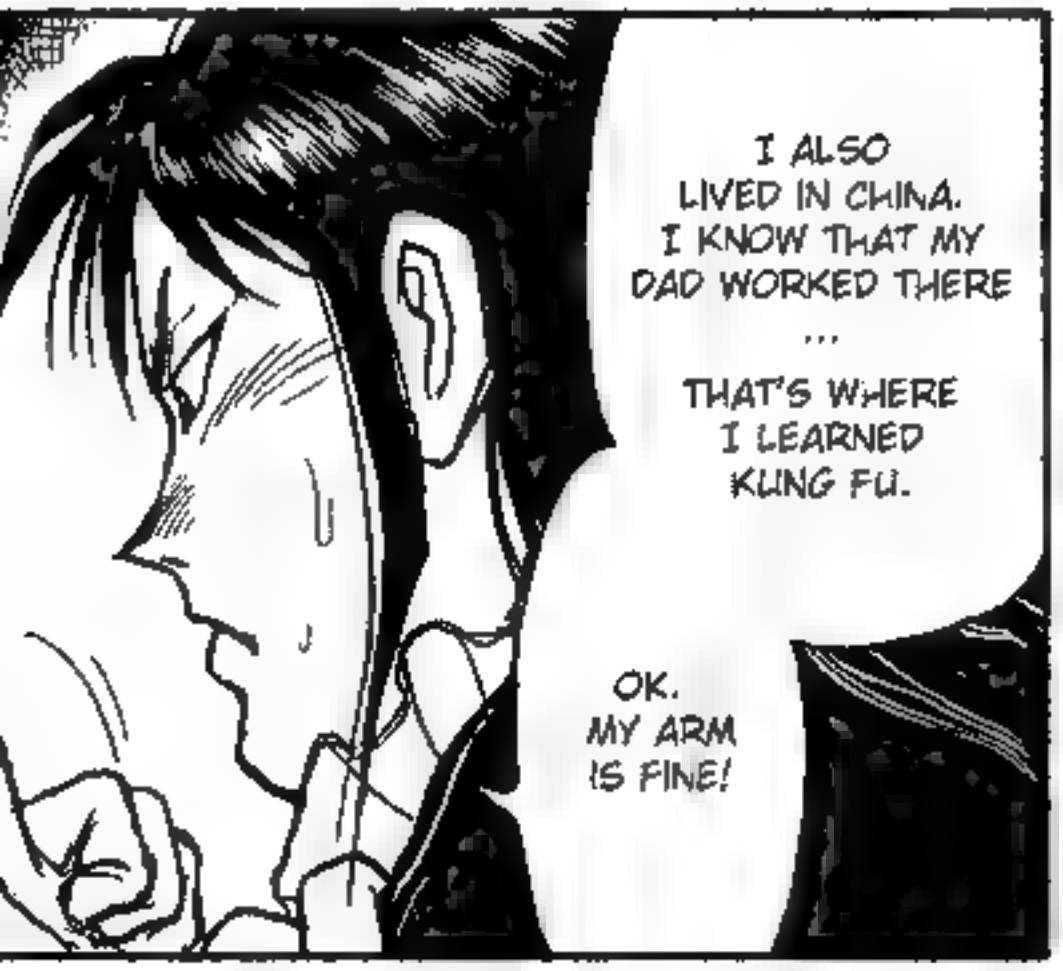
I KNOW I'M JAPANESE

...AND THAT MY NAME IS NARUMI KATO!

I HOPE THIS ARM ISN'T BROKEN ...

IT SMELLS A LITTLE ROTTEN, BUT IT'S VERY PRECIOUS TO ME.

HOTEL


I ALSO LIVED IN CHINA. I KNOW THAT MY DAD WORKED THERE ...
THAT'S WHERE I LEARNED KUNG FU.
OK. MY ARM IS FINE!

WHAT A BLOW...

THEN
I DON'T REMEMBER ANYTHING
AFTER THAT...

3
4
PIII
THAT'S WHY I WENT BACK TO JAPAN...

4
TO TAKE ON SMALL JOBS THAT WOULD ALLOW ME TO MAKE PEOPLE LAUGH.

BACK IN CHINA, I CAUGHT A DISEASE WHICH CAN BE FATAL IF I DON'T MAKE OTHERS LAUGH ...
THE NAME OF THAT SINISTER DISEASE IS "ZONAPHA SYNDROME" I REMEMBER THAT WELL TOO.

HOW DID I LOSE MY ARM?

AND WHY AM I IN FRANCE NOW?!

OK...

...I'D BETTER CALM DOWN.

DING

I GOT SOME OF MY MEMORIES BACK. THAT'S NOT TOO BAD.

BUT THERE ARE STILL THINGS I DON'T GET...

...AND THAT BOTHERS ME, EVEN THOUGH I KNOW WHO I AM.

I'M GONNA GIVE HIM A PIECE OF MY MIND, THAT PSEUDO-DOCTOR!

WHEN I THINK HE SAID "TO RECOVER YOUR MEMORY, THE BEST THING WOULD BE TO PRACTICE TO BECOME A CLOWN"! BULLCRAP!

I UNDERSTOOD THAT IT WASN'T BY CHOICE THAT I DRESSED LIKE A CLOWN EVERY DAY AND PRACTICED MIMING AND JUGGLING...

GUY-CHRISTOPHE RECH!

DAN

HEY! GUY!

I GOT MY MEMORY BACK!

YOU STUPID IDIOT!

...AND TODAY, I ALMOST ENDED UP DEAD BECAUSE OF A CAR! LUCKILY, THE SHOCK ALSO GAVE ME MY MEMORY BACK!

I RAN OUT OF MEDICINE TWO DAYS AGO...

I WAS STUPIDLY DOING WHAT YOU TOLD ME TO DO, WITHOUT THINKING!

UNTIL NOW, BECAUSE OF THE MEDICINE YOU GAVE ME AND THAT STUPID CLOWN THERAPY YOU TOLD ME TO DO, MY MIND WAS NEVER REALLY THERE!!!

HM..

YOU GOTTA TELL ME EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT ME!

SHOOT! HE'S NOT THERE ..

USUALLY, IF HE'S NOT IN HIS HOTEL ROOM, HE COMES HERE TO ENJOY HIMSELF

I REALLY DON'T UNDER-STAND THIS GUY!

. BUT IF HE WANTS A LITTLE FEMALE COMPANY, HE COMES ALL THE WAY OUT HERE.

HE CAN LIVE IN THE SUITE OF A BIG HOTEL IN DOWNTOWN PARIS...

HEY! GUY!!!

BOM

BOM

SLAC

I'M COMING IN!

BOM

ANSWER ME! WHAT AM I DOING IN FRANCE ?!

LA

SLURP

"LIFE IS A STAGE"

"EVERYBODY HAS A ROLE TO PLAY ON IT"

HEE HEE

SHAKE-SPEARE ONCE SAID

BLUP BLUP

KNOW THAT...

...IS THAT OF A HARLEQUIN WHO SINGS A BEAUTIFUL BALLAD DEDICATED TO THOSE WHO ARE TIRED OF LIVING!

...THE ROLE I GAVE MYSELF...

...BOTHER THIS HARLEQUIN?

REALLY! WHAT KIND OF IDIOT WOULD DARE...

SHUT UP!!! I'VE GOT NO INTENT TO TAKE PART IN YOUR PRETENTIOUS LITTLE MASQUERADE!!!

ZAAM

TELL ME WHERE THAT HAPPENED!

AND ALSO HOW AND WHY I LOST AN ARM!

YOU TOLD ME THAT IT WAS YOU WHO FOUND ME ABOUT FOUR MONTHS AGO!

YOU'RE GONNA TALK!

GRRRR ...

YOU ARE THE PERFECT ILLUSTRATION TO KONIG'S THEORY, WHICH SAYS: "EVEN A STUPID MONKEY CAN LEARN SOMETHING, THANKS TO EXERCISES REPEATED REGULARLY"!

I'M SLOWLY GETTING USED TO IT!

IT'S TRUE THAT I WAS IN EXTREME SHOCK... BUT I'VE NEVER BEEN TO FRANCE BEFORE! IT'S ONLY BEEN FOUR MONTHS SINCE I STARTED LEARNING FRENCH!

AT FIRST, YOU COULDN'T SAY A WORD... BUT MAYBE THAT WAS BECAUSE OF THE SHOCK YOU SUSTAINED WHEN YOU LOST YOUR ARM...

YOUR FRENCH GETS BETTER EVERY DAY, NARUMI!

HEUH HEUH

ARE YOU MOCKING ME, OR WHAT?!? YOU WANT ME TO HIT YOU?!

BUT I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT YOU WOULD HIT A SICK PERSON...

I UNDERSTAND PERFECTLY.. THAT YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT THOSE DARK SPOTS THAT REMAIN IN YOUR MEMORY ...

GRRR

!!!

...WHAT?

HEUH

THAT DEVIOUS MAN! HE ALWAYS CHANGES THE SUB-JECT LIKE THAT!

NO WAY! IT'S RED WINE!

... BLOOD!

AH!

SAF...

IN THIS WORLD WHERE OBSESSION WITH PLEASURE REIGNS, AND THERE IS BOREDOM, AND THERE IS ALSO A BIG BOAR-MAN WHO QUICKLY TURNS TO HIS FISTS, EVEN AGAINST THE WEAK ..

MOMMY...

NOT ONLY THAT... HE'S A MAMA'S BOY!!!

KISS

YOU INCARNATE THE BEAUTY OF THIS WORLD.

ZAZAM

GUY! LISTEN TO ME WHEN I SPEAK TO YOU!

HUH?! WHO'S THE "BIG BOAR-MAN"?!

LET ME REMIND YOU THAT I'M THE ONE WHO FOUND YOU PRACTICALLY DEAD...

AND WITH ONE LESS ARM.

I'M THE ONE WHO HEALED YOU AND GAVE YOU THIS SPECIAL PROS-THETIC ARM!

I THOUGHT JAPANESE PEOPLE WERE OVERLY POLITE, TO THE POINT OF SERVILITY!

YOU TIRE ME OUT.

BUT EVERY TIME YOU SPEAK, YOU MANAGE TO PISS ME OFF!

YEAH... MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT!

GRRR

YOU SHOULD BE A LITTLE MORE GRATEFUL. I THINK YOU SHOULD EVEN KNEEL BEFORE ME AND WORSHIP ME AS YOUR GOD!

YOU OWE ME YOUR LIFE! SO... TRY NOT TO FORGET THAT!

SHAD-DUUUP !!!

MOMMY! THERE'S A MEAN "TOP-KNOT MAN" OVER THERE!

STOP MAKING FUN OF THE JAPANESE! WE'RE NOT LIKE THAT ANY-MORE!

ACTUALLY, THE JAPANESE STILL WEAR TOP-KNOTS AND THEIR COUNTRY IS STILL CLOSED TO THE WORLD!

PFFT!

ALRIGHT, THAT'S ENOUGH! GIMME THAT STUPID PENDANT AND LISTEN TO ME!

AH!

DAH

MOMMY ...

GHH HH

OH! MOM...

NO!

AND HE'S COMPLETELY GAGA!

HE'S SO MEAN...

... MOMMY!

HUH HUH HUH

OH WELL, YOU'RE PROBABLY AT A POINT WHERE YOU HAVE TO MAKE PROGRESS NO MATTER WHAT, TO PRESERVE YOUR MISERABLE LIFE.

YOU'RE JUST AS MEAN AS YOU LOOK!

COME ON! HURRY UP!

HEUH HEUH

...

BOM

IN ORDER TO NOT SNUFF OUT THAT LITTLE SPARK OF INTELLIGENCE IN YOU, I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU SOME INFO, BUT VERY SLOWLY...

YES, BETWEEN AUTOMATONS AND THE HUMANS WHO TRY TO DESTROY THEM ...

... AH?

...WITHOUT ANYONE'S KNOWLEDGE, A GREAT STRUGGLE HAS BEEN TAKING PLACE IN THE SHADOWS.

FOR TWO CENTURIES ...

...THIS INFO WILL BE MUCH MORE USEFUL BY ALLOWING YOU TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION.

RATHER THAN THE ANSWERS YOU EXPECT

WHAT ARE YOU BABBLING ABOUT?!

WHAT I WANNA KNOW...

...THINK AND ACT OF THEIR OWN ACCORD.

THE AUTOMA-TONS I'M TALKING ABOUT...

YOU TALK ABOUT AUTOMATONS, BUT THEY'RE JUST PUPPETS WITH SPRINGS, LIKE THE ONES ON SOME MUSIC BOXES, RIGHT?

WHAT?!

WAIT!

WHAT IF, IN ADDITION ...

...THEY WERE TRYING TO BRING MISFORTUNE TO THE HUMAN WORLD?

BUT WHAT IF IT WERE TRUE?

SO THEY'RE ROBOTS! BUT EVEN WITH TODAY'S SCIENCE, WE CAN'T MAKE THEM YET!

HUH?! WHAT THE HECK IS THAT?!?

DA DA DA

GET DOWN!

CYBELE.

WE MISSED OUR TARGET,

IT'S A MISS,

HELEN.

CLK CLK CLK CLK CLK

GLAC

SCHLAC

CLIC CLIC

LET'S KEEP GOING, HELEN!

WITH PLEASURE, CYBELE!

...THEY'RE ALITOMA-TONS!

THEY PERFECTLY ILLUSTRATE WHAT I WAS TELLING YOU.

BUT... THESE GIRLS... THEY...

ZZAN ZZAN

THEY ARE ALL CALLED...

CLIC CLIC

THEY USE VERY SPECIAL PUPPETS.

CLIC CLIC

AGAINST THEM, THERE IS A GROUP OF HUMANS WHOSE SOLE PURPOSE IS TO DESTROY THEM.

LON

...
"SHIROGANE"!

NARUMI,
YOU'RE GOING TO
HAVE TO GIVE ME
A HAND...

...AND I PROMISED MYSELF THAT WHEN I GREW UP I'D GO TO THE MOST DANGEROUS PLACE I COULD FIND.

MY NAME IS NARUMI KAYIBA...

A.T. VII - KARADA NO HITO - NO MAN

"NARUMI'S LEFT-ARM"

I WAS IN FRANCE.

AND SOMETIMES

HIMSELF A DOCTOR, CLAIMS HE SAVED MY LIFE

ZAAAN

ZZZAAAN

ACT VIII: KARAKURI • A MAN

"NARUMI'S LEFT ARM"

THOSE GIRLS! THEY'VE GOT WEAPONS COMING OUT OF THEIR BODIES! AND YOU...

...YOU HIDE A WEIRD, GIANT PUPPET IN YOUR SUIT-CASE!

I ALREADY EXPLAINED EVERYTHING. THOSE GIRLS ARE AUTOMATONS, AND THEY'RE HERE TO KILL ME!

SHOCK

CLIC

YES! WHEN THEY FIGHT US, THEY ALWAYS USE THE SAME, OLD, ARCHAIC PUPPETS! DON'T THEY, CYBELE?

CLIC

HA HA! YOU SEE? SHIROGANES ALWAYS ACT THE SAME WAY!

ISN'T IT TRUE, HELEN?

FURTHERMORE, I SEE THAT YOU'RE NOT LISTENING TO ME... I TOLD YOU THAT THE SOLE PURPOSE OF THESE PEOPLE CALLED "SHIRO-GANE" WAS TO DESTROY THOSE AUTOMATONS.

WITH YOUR SHAKY VOICE, YOU DON'T LOOK TOO MANLY!

BUT... WH-WH-WHY ARE THESE AUTOMATONS AFTER YOU?

THEN I'LL SETTLE THE SCORE WITH THE SHIRO-GANE!

CLK CLK CLK CLK

HELEN, I'LL TAKE CARE OF THAT BIG CLOWN...

AND I'M A "SHIRO-GANE".

NARUMI... I'M THE ONE WHO SAVED YOUR LIFE.

ZZAANN

SO... YOU'RE GOING TO ASSIST ME IN MY WORK!

NOT ON YOUR LIFE!!!

SHOOT, MAN! I DON'T WANNA BE INVOLVED IN SUCH A WEIRD AND COMPLICATED STORY!

...

DAH

AAH !!!

HA HA HA HA HA HA

FROM SHAKE-SPEARE'S "TWELFTH NIGHT".

"THE CLOCK UPBRAIDS ME WITH THE WASTE OF TIME"

YOU AND I, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE A GOOD TIME!

TSK TSK! YOU'RE NOT LEAVING!

DON'T YOU AGREE, MY DARLING ?

AND YOU'RE GOING TO SATISFY ME...

YOU'RE GOING TO CARESS ME FOR A LOOONG TIME!

I'M NOT GOING TO KILL YOU SO BRUTALLY!

...SO?

...!

BELIEVE ME, I'M NOT ATTRACTED TO YOU AT ALL!

SHOOT!

HAHAHA

WAIT FOR ME!

...MY DASHING STRANGER!

HEE HEE HEE! YOU'RE SUCH A BAD LIAR...

BRIOM

GLA

POOR LITTLE SHIROGANE. YOU'RE IN A BIG PINCH NOW!

AS YOU CAN SEE, YOUR BODYGUARD RAN AWAY!

GLK

SCHLANG

SCHLAK

ZZAAN

THEY THINK THAT WE SHIROGANES ALWAYS NEED A BODYGUARD TO PROTECT OUR BACKS!

...AUTOMATONS STILL THINK THE SAME WAY.

I SEE THAT...

FAREWELL, SHIROGANE!

AT-AAAH

BUT IT'S TRUE! ANYWAY, IT WON'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE... NO ONE CAN AVOID MY BULLETS!

SPIRIT OF THE
COM

...OLYMPIA!

DANCE FOR ME, MY DEAREST...

HOOH

!

BLING

DOOH

THE LEGENDARY SHIROGANE WHO'S ALREADY KILLED 200 OF OUR BRETHREN...

THEN... YOU ARE...

WHAT ?!

OLYMPIA ?!

BZZZAAA

CYBE . LE! YOU MUST RUN!

THIS MAN ..

GUY-CHRISTOPHE . RECH...?!

DO

BOOM

GAAAH!

GOH

LET'S PLAY A LITTLE MORE TOGETHER!

BOOM

I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO BEAT... PUPPETS LIKE THEM!

...WHAT INCREDIBLE... STRENGTH!

YOU STILL HAVE A LOT OF PLEASURE TO GIVE ME!

HA HA HA! YOU ARE WONDERFUL! YOU ARE SO STURDY!

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR, NARUMI?!

COME ON! LET'S DO IT AGAIN, ONE MORE TIME!

DON'T THINK ABOUT IT SO MUCH!

ARE YOU STUPID OR WHAT?! ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS TO USE YOUR OWN STRENGTH. IT WILL BE MORE THAN ENOUGH.

GUY..

GRRR

WHAT?!

ZAN

YOU'RE ALREADY COWERING IN FEAR?! JUST BECAUSE YOU DON'T KNOW YOUR ENEMY?!

WHAT A LOSER!

HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT?

WHAT?!

YOU DON'T WANT TO SAVE YOUR "BODY-GUARD"?

KEEP IT UP!

HEY BEAUTIFUL! WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?!

GUY!!! YOU MISERABLE WORM!!! I FORBID YOU TO MAKE FUN OF ME!!!

"NOT ON YOUR LIFE!!"

HE'S PARALYZED WITH FEAR WHEN HE THINKS AN ENEMY IS STRONGER THAN HE IS! AND YOU WANT ME TO SAVE A GUY LIKE THAT?!

HE'S VERY RESILIENT AND HE KNOWS PERFECTLY WELL HOW TO DEFEND HIMSELF. YET

I'LL TELL YOU IN HIS OWN WORDS...

NO MATTER HOW STRONG YOU ARE, THERE'S NO WAY YOU'LL BE ABLE TO MAKE ME LET GO!

GAAH!

GOOOOOH

GHHH

COME ON, COME ON! I STILL WANNA HAVE FUN!

AAH!

AH! BY THE WAY, NARUMI! I MUST POINT OUT...

THAT THERE IS A KNOB NEAR YOUR LEFT ARMPIT.

TURN IT.

UGHHH!

THIS IS "ST GEORGE'S BLADE"

IT'S A VERY USEFUL LITTLE WEAPON.

SHUT UP, GUY! ...SHUT UP!

YOUR LEFT ARM IS...

SCHRAC

CAREFUL, NARUMI! YOUR RIGHT ARM IS NOT ARTIFICIAL!

SPA

HE

ACT VII:
KARAKURI
* A MAN

"WE
MUST
LEAVE
PARIS"

BLORP

GRAAAH !!!

IMPOS-SIBLE!

ME, AN AUTO-MATON... VANQUISHED BY A HUMAN?!

SPLASCHHH

AND... ALSO...

AUTO-MATONS WHO MOVE BY THEM-SELVES!

THIS IS CRAZY...

BRLOFF

AAAH! WHAT'S THIS THING IN MY A-A-ARM?!

HE HE HE...

HITTING THAT AUTOMATON WITH YOUR REAL ARM-- THAT WAS RECKLESS!

IT WAS NAMED AFTER A LEGENDARY SAINT SAID TO HAVE VANQUISHED AN ENORMOUS DRAGON BY HIMSELF ...

IT'S "ST. GEORGE'S BLADE."

YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE CAREFUL, NARUMI ...

POF

THAT'S NOT WHAT I WAS ASKING ABOUT!!!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, NARUMI?

SO PATHETIC!

...THAT WAS SOME FALL WHEN YOU GOT THAT AUTOMATON IN YOUR FACE! ...WHAT A FLIGHT!

YOU CAN PRETEND ALL YOU WANT! BUT...

OUAHAHAHA

OH LA LAA!

ABSO-LUTELY NOT!

"YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE CAREFUL, NARUMI" ...

WHEREAS YOU, YOU WENT AIR-BORNE!

SEE NOW ...

YOU WERE SITTING ON YOUR SUIT-CASE, BEING THE PLAY-BOY...

THEN... BADA BING, BADA BOOM!

PAF

BACK THEN...

THE SAME SEQUENCE IN SLOW MOTION

I DID NOT GO AIRBORNE!

I JUST STUMBLED A LITTLE WHILE TURNING AROUND.

HUH?

NOW LISTEN HERE! GUY RECH DOES NOT FALL STUPIDLY OR DISGRACEFULLY! ... IS THAT UNDERSTOOD?!

ZOING

HE HE! BULL-SHIT!

POF!

SAH

BATAN

BOM

BLOW

YOU GOT THE CRAP BEAT OUT OF YOU!!! SAY IT!

...

I JUST TRIPPED

BRIOW

SNIF

OH NO! THAT'S ENOUGH !!!

MOMMY

SNIF

GOH GOH

WAAAAH!

ZAWN

NARUMI, UNFOLD YOUR BLADE MANUALLY TO USE IT!

SHIT!

SHE'S STILL STANDING, THAT ONE?!

SCH

HA HA HA

BYE BYE, DOLLY!

BR-A-A-A

HM?

YES...

THAT'S THE REASON WHY I WANT YOU TO HELP ME DESTROY THEM.

HM...

BACK THEN, I HAD THE FEELING THAT I COULD BEAT THEM, EVEN WITH JUST MY NORMAL ARM.

...TO CUT THEM IN HALF IN ORDER TO OBLITERATE THEIR VITAL FUNCTIONS. THE SECOND ...

THE FIRST IS...

LISTEN, THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO PERMANENTLY STOP AN AUTOMATON:

THIS VITAL ENERGY IS PRESENT IN EVERYTHING ...

AH?

...IN ORDER TO BLOW UP THEIR INSIDES.

...IS TO HIT THEM...

...WHILE FOCUSING YOUR VITAL ENERGY...

BOOM

AS A KUNG FU PRACTITIONER, YOU MUST BE FAMILIAR WITH "KI."

THOSE WHO LEARN TO CONTROL IT CAN SUMMON INCREDIBLE STRENGTH WITHIN THEMSELVES AND USE IT...

IN FIGHTING TECHNIQUES CALLED "HAKKEI."

SPA

HA

IT'S THE SOURCE OF THEIR POWER... THIS IS WHAT GIVES THEM LIFE.

BLOOD? THAT?! ... LOOKS LIKE MERCURY!

LOOK. THIS IS AUTOMATON BLOOD...

THEY EXPLODE BECAUSE THEIR VITAL FLUID STARTS BOILING INSTANTANEOUSLY.

WHEN YOU PROJECT A LARGE AMOUNT OF "KI" AGAINST THEM,

YOU WILL NOT FIND ANY SEAM ON THEIR SKIN, NOT EVEN AT THE JOINTS.

EVERY-THING LOOKS PERFECT. THEIR PORES, THEIR HAIR...

THEY KEEP ON RESEARCHING WAYS TO IMPROVE THEIR APPEARANCE.

THEY WANT IT TO BE AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE TO THAT OF HUMAN BEINGS.

THIS FEELS LIKE HUMAN SKIN!

I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE IT....

YOU'RE ALREADY ABLE TO FACE AUTOMATONS JUST WITH YOUR HUMAN BODY.

NOW YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHY I NEED YOUR HELP.

...THAT MY HEAD IS GONNA EXPLODE TOO.

I'M HEARING SO MANY INCREDIBLE THINGS...

SCRATCH SCRATCH

DIDN'T YOU JUST TELL ME THAT I CAN FIGHT AUTOMATONS BY MYSELF?!

THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M ASKING! ... WHY DID YOU GIVE ME THIS CRAZY ARM INSTEAD OF A NORMAL PROSTHE-SIS?!

...

HM

...

...THEN HERE, AND THAT'S IT!

ZM

TO PUT IT AWAY, FOLD IT HERE...

AND THAT?

...FOR "CERTAIN" BATTLES.

YES... BUT ONE DAY, THAT WON'T BE ENOUGH ANY-MORE. YOUR HUMAN BODY WON'T BE STRONG ENOUGH...

YOU WILL DO IT.

THERE'S NO WAY I'M GONNA KEEP ON FIGHTING!

HEY!

FURTHER-MORE.

UH...

...AND WHY YOU WOKE UP HERE IN FRANCE.

ESPECIALLY IF I PROMISE TO TELL YOU WHY YOU LOST AN ARM...

HA HA HA!

...

SEE? YOU ALREADY WANT TO COME WITH ME!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

...YOU'LL BE ABLE TO RENEW EVEN STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE DEAR TO YOU, BUT OF WHOM YOU HAVE NO MEMORY AT THE MOMENT.

BY FIGHTING...

POLICE

POLICE

POLICE

SOMEONE CALLED THE POLICE!

!

YOU HAVE NO MONEY, NO PAPERS... IN THIS COUNTRY, YOU ARE JUST AN ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT!

THERE'S ANOTHER GOOD REASON TO COME WITH ME...

WAAAAH! HOW ARE WE GONNA EXPLAIN ALL THIS?!

...

I DON'T HAVE ANY PAPERS, NOT EVEN A PASSPORT!

COME, IT'S YOUR TURN TO HELP,

OLYMPIA.

YOU DON'T HAVE A CHOICE... BELIEVE ME, NARUMI...

VLOM

WH WHAT'S THAT?!?

EH?!

FLAP!

IT IS NOW TIME TO DECIDE!

NARUMI ..

ZAN

KRONF

AFF

SSA

WAAAAAHHH !!!

KOOMM

AND I HATE THIS FLYING PUPPET!

SHADDUP! I HATE YOUR PRETENTIOUS AND KNOW-IT-ALL ATTITUDE!

SO WHAT?

NARUMI, WHAT VULGAR-ITY!

WHY DO I HAVE TO GO THROUGH ALL THIS?!

SHIT SHIT SHIT!

DO

...

NOTHING!

...

CIRCUS

APPAR-
ENTLY,

I DON'T
HAVE A
CHOICE.

CIRCUS

...
OK
...

ALRIGHT?

YOU'RE
GOING TO
ACCOMPANY
ME TO THE
"BIRTHPLACE"
OF THE
SHIROGANES
...

WITH THIS
SETTLED...

BZZZ

CLAC

CLAC

CLAC

CLAC

CLAC

SCHLAK

HAVE-
LEFT-
PARIS-

AND-
OTHER-
MAN-

GUY-

- MESSAGE -

PARIS
-

THEY-
HAVE-
LEFT-

FLAP

FLAP

FLAP

ACT VII: KARAKURI * A MAN

"THE GREAT TENT"

BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH...

MY LEFT ARM, COMPLETELY AMPUTATED...

IN A BIG BED...

I'M LYING...

THIS VISION...

IT'S A DREAM...

THIS ARM...

I'VE SEEN IT SOMEWHERE...

AM I WRONG?

GOO

OH

A DREAM... THAT I OFTEN HAVE...

PLOP...

AGAIN, I'M ... LYING IN THIS BED ...

AQUA VITAE ... ?!

THESE ARE THE LAST DROPS OF MY AQUA VITAE...

NARUMI ...

AQUA VITAE... THE "WATER OF LIFE."

THEN, YOU WILL...

LEND ME YOUR STRENGTH.

...YOU WILL RISE FROM THE DEAD, THANKS TO MY ULTIMATE ELIXIR!

LIKE THE PHOENIX, FIRST SYMBOL OF MY RESEARCH ...

GUY?

...

WHAT?

...

THOSE ARE ALL THE MEMORIES I HAVE LEFT FROM BEFORE MY ACCIDENT...

MOMENTS FROM BEFORE I LOST MY ARM... BEFORE FINDING MYSELF IN FRANCE...

WATER EVERY-WHERE... WALLS COLLAPSING...

...AND A BOY WITH SUCH A BRIGHT SMILE

FLAMES...

AND A REAL PRETTY GIRL... WHO'S CRYING...

PIW
PIW
PIW
PIW
PIW
SAH...
SHIT!
I FELL ASLEEP!
!

TAN

ARE WE THERE?

VHHHH

YES

I'M COLD!

IN THE END, WE TOOK THE CAR!

WE STARTED FLYING WITH OLYMPIA, BUT...

SPLASCHH

QUIBERON?

VHHHH

HE SAID WE WERE GOING TO THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE SHIROGANES...

IT'S HERE ...

VVVHHH

AN ABANDONED GRAVEYARD... IN A PLACE JUST AS WITHERED AND DECREPIT...

VHH

CLANG CLANG

HUH?

CLANG

NOT MY KINDA PLACE...

CLANG

CLANG

A WELL...

HEY, WAIT FOR ME, TOM!

HURRY UP, JACK!

FHH

FHH

Greentown, Illinois, USA

ON THE FLYER I SAW, IT SAID THE SHOW WOULD START TOMORROW, BUT THIS AFTERNOON, THE HILL WAS STILL EMPTY!

YEAH, I'M SURE! AND THEY'RE PUTTING UP THEIR TENT TONIGHT!

SO... IS IT TRUE WHAT YOU SAID, TOM?! THERE'S REALLY A CIRCUS THAT'S GONNA COME BY HERE?!

IT WASN'T EASY SNEAKING OUT OF THE HOUSE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT!

WHHH

YEAH, ME TOO

I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO SEE HOW THEY PUT UP CIRCUS TENTS!

DOOHH

...

I CAN'T SEE ANY-THING ...

SO?

WHHH

YES! OVER THERE!

...!

WHO

VLANG

VLOMP

SCHLAK

ZO

OHH

BLING

SCHRAK

CLANG

SCHLING

ZZAANNV

THE TENT... IT OPENED... BY ITSELF!

...

LIKE THE WINGS OF A HUGE BIRD!

Y... YEAH...

D-DID YOU SEE THAT... TOM?

GOH

A RAVEN?

FLAP FLAP

EEK!!!

...THERE WERE ALL THESE GEARS TURNING!

IT WAS SPLIT OPEN DOWN THE MIDDLE... AND INSIDE...

WHAT IS IT, JACK?

THAT BIRD...

AH. .

FLAP

FLAP

MESSAGE...

MESSAGE...

FLAP

FLAP

LEFT-
PARIS-

FLAP

FLAP

HAVE-
LEFT-
PARIS-

GUY-
AND-
OTHER-
MAN-

COLOM-
BINE.

THAT MEANS
HELEN AND
CYBELE FAILED,
DOESN'T IT?

...THEY
LEFT
PARIS?

COLOM-
BINE.

IF THAT'S THE CASE, HE MUST HAVE USED THE AQUA VITAE TO SAVE HIM... DON'T YOU THINK?

IT MUST BE SO, PANTALON.

THE OTHER MAN IS THE ONE GUY BROUGHT BACK HALF-DEAD FROM JAPAN, RIGHT?

THAT'S TOO STUPID! THEN ALL THE AQUA VITAE GUY HAD IS NOW DEPLETED!

...

THIS DOESN'T MEAN TROUBLE FOR US, DOES IT, PANTALON?

SAH ...

...WE WILL BE ABLE TO OBTAIN AQUA VITAE IN ABUNDANCE!

SOON, WHEN THE HUMANS HAVE COMPLETELY DISAPPEARED FROM THIS PLANET...

CALM DOWN, MY FRIENDS!

...

IN ANY CASE, WE NEVER REALLY COUNTED ON GUY'S AQUA VITAE FOR OUR PLAN TO SUCCEED!

YOU ARE INDEED RIGHT, DOTTORE.

BLONG

HM ...

YES,

THAT'S TRUE, DOTTORE.

AT THAT TIME, WE AUTOMA-TONS...

...INCLUDING MYSELF, ARLEQUINO...

...WILL BE ABLE TO BECOME HUMAN! THANKS TO THE AQUA VITAE!

UNTIL THAT DAY...

...OUR "MIDNIGHT CIRCUS" PARADE WILL CARRY ON.

COME ON, LET'S GO, JACK!

YEAH ...

TUUT

WHAT IS IT, JACK?!

HAAA!

HUUUH!!!

GUH

HAAA

HUUUH

HAAA

AAAH... I... I...

HAAA

...THIS IS WHERE ALL THE SHIROGANES WERE BORN!

NARUMI...

THIS WATER WAS ABLE TO CURE EVERY DISEASE AND GIVE LIFE TO INANIMATE PUPPETS.

WHAT WERE YOU SAYING, GUY?

A LONG TIME AGO, THIS WELL WAS FILLED WITH A MIRACULOUS WATER.